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THE

PHILOSOPHY OF THE BEAUTIFUL

BY

JOHN G. MACVICAR, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "AN INQUIRY INTO HUMAN NATURE," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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BY SAMUEL EDMONSTON.

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INTRODUCTION.

Of the Beautiful it may be truly affirmed, that it has more to commend it as a source of enjoyment than anything else in the whole range of enjoyable things. Wherever it makes its apparition in the works of God, it whispers of truth and goodness, and elevates the beholder while it delights him. And wherever it appears in the works of man, it bespeaks the charms of genius. The pursuit of truth and goodness is no doubt higher; and is not without a higher reward. But truth is often difficult to discover, and when it has been found, often proves to be painful; goodness too is difficult to be realised. Beauty, on the other hand, is both obvious and easy of access. In order to take and to keep possession of the entire domain of the Beautiful, and to enjoy it to the full—no labours of acquisition—no cares of conservation are required. No legal title *to hold* is needed. The title *to behold*, is enough—a title this, which to acquire, demands no more than those faculties which all men have by natural inheritance, an eye to see, and an ear to hear, with reason to judge, and a heart to feel.

Very sweet also is the kind of enjoyment which the contemplation of the Beautiful awakens in the breast. It is an emotion indeed, and therefore implies excitement; but, compared with many others that are ardently pursued, the emotion of the Beautiful is very calm. It is, as it were, sunshine in the soul. But let us not discourse upon the generalities of our theme; for iteration is hateful; and the generalities of taste have often been set forth perfectly well in the English language already, and in all the languages of Europe.

Let us rather proceed at once to the theory of Æsthetic Beauty, a theory which appears to be adequate both to explain Beauty, and to account for its charms; and to which (in his own seeming at least) it has fallen to the author's lot to contribute something. And should his contribution obtain the reader's vote in its favour, should it produce in his mind the same effect which it has produced in the author's, he will not grudge the time this volume may demand for perusal. To think so may, indeed, be merely the partiality of an author; but the view of Beauty given in the following pages, seems to him at least, to invest the whole theme with an air of peculiar sacredness, and the whole of nature with still higher charms. Upon the fine arts also, it seems to him to confer a new dignity. In fact, every discussion on the fine arts is brought by it within the domain of science. To the arts of ornamental design also which now begin to receive amongst us such princely countenance and general consideration, it renders well known principles of science applicable; for, according to what is here unfolded, the lineaments of Beauty by which the eye is flattered or the ear regaled, are as determinate as any propositions in mathematics, and are by no means beyond the reach of discovery. The views which follow (supposing them to be generally admitted) would supply both to the connoisseur and the tasteful public, articulate principles of judgment by which there might be mutual explanations between the different observers of the same beautiful object, if not of the feelings which that object awoke in them, at least of the grounds of their opinion. And thus, as to the Fine Arts, discussion would in future admit of a logical form, as it has done in reference to the Economic Arts since the epoch of Galileo. It would be possible both to point out and to prove a fine feature or a fault in reference to an ornament, a picture, or a poem, as it has long been in reference to a bridge, or a harbour.

And, therefore, to the artist also the views of the following pages (always supposing them to be sound) would be of value. In those moments when the inspiration of genius might lead him on to extravagance, they would effectually check him. Nay, supposing him to be fully in possession of them—supposing him to have made them so fully his own, that they belonged, as it were, to the spontaneity of his own mind, they would be of great value in regulating and forming at least, if not even in developing, original conceptions of the Beautiful in his imagination. They would, in that case, be to the artist's eye what Shakespeare, when touching on the invention of poetry, ascribes to the poet's pen.* Not that they or anything else could supply, where it was wanting, the place of the " fine frenzy"—" the glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven"—or the imagination that has power to " body forth the form of things unknown;" but without destroying the fine frenzy—without interfering with the roll, or trammelling the glance of the eye of genius, they would tend to keep the artist ever true to nature, and, by carrying him away in communion with her spirit, would tend to exclude from his conceptions the disturbing influence of volition—a principle this, which is essentially personal and private, and which, as often as it ventures without consulting nature on exhibiting creations of its own, produces only the ridiculous.

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* " The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
And as imagination bodies forth
The form of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."
Midsummer Night's Dream.

Nor let it be apprehended, that by bringing the emotion of the beautiful so far within the sphere of reason, it will lose anything of the native delight which belongs to it. On the contrary, that delight is enhanced—enhanced by all the difference that there is between that which is wrapt in the utter darkness of a seemingly sensuous emotion, and that which reposes in the light of intelligence. In opposition to this there is indeed an indignant stanza of Byron, that in which he closes his criticism on the Venus of the Tribune;* and much of the same kind is popular. But as to Byron, it were easy to show that, though he was exquisitely alive to Beauty, yet he never knew what it was to enjoy it, at least when actually beholding it. And as to the popular aversion to the doctrine that there are definite principles of taste, which is unhappily to be found too often among us, it is either merely the aversion to whatever demands study, or else it is a still lingering homage to the philosophy of Hume, which, when applied to matters of taste, having secured the eloquence both of the divine and the barrister to advocate it, still finds not a few partizans amongst us. According to the philosophy of Hume, custom is the great guide of life. What we have enjoyed before, we enjoy again when it is spontaneously suggested in the memory or imagination. Objects which possess the power of suggesting such recollections we thank, we like to look at, and call beautiful. Such is the theory of Beauty on the principle of association ; and doubtless, association accounts for much of the joy and many of the sorrows which we feel at the sight of objects. Nay, even in the view in which it was brought forward, the association theory may be designated an ingenious hypothesis for the close of the eighteenth century, when the philosophy then popular did not admit, as the ground of any knowledge, anything higher than self-repetition, and the transformation of sensations. But to propound mere recollection as a theory which does justice to Beauty, and is adequate to explain its charms, is what but few surely in the middle of the nineteenth century will admit. To extend to entire humanity, the proverb which affirms it only of the fool that, as the bell clinks, so he thinks, is surely too bad. The time is come surely, when we may believe again that man is something more than a mere automaton. At all events, as to the Beautiful, in the following pages the attempt is made to shew, that wheresoever it presents itself, it awakes in the beholder a judgment as well as an emotion, and calls for the exercise of reason as well as of sensibility—reason which, far from being the creature of custom, or of this life only, holds its title from Him who inhabiteth Eternity, and is in truth the light of His countenance on the soul, dimmed and distorted no doubt by ignorance and sin, yet not without some rays from heaven.

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* Childe Harold, B. iv., st. 53.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE BEAUTY OF NATURE—A DEFENCE.

If it be asked what is the grand treasury and storehouse of beauty, and where is it that we may go and acquaint ourselves with Beauty at her own home, doubtless the answer is that it is Nature. Whether we gaze upon the canopy of the heavens, with the beautiful stars gemming the dark brow of Night, or confining our regards to the earth, we look abroad upon the varied scenery of the landscape, its mountain ranges and headlands, its valleys and plains, with their rivers meandering through them, or upon the boundless expanse of the vast ocean towards which they pour their waters, now slumbering peacefully in the gentle light of a summer morning, now rolling its tempestuous billows on the wintry shore, all must be felt and admitted to be beautiful, eminently beautiful. Or if anywhere, or in reference to any object the term beautiful be felt not to apply, it is only because the grandeur of its scale, and the awe which it inspires, affirm it to be sublime.

And as it is with the great features of nature, so it is with the individual objects which she produces—minerals, plants, and animals. Very many of them, gems, flowers, birds, for instance, are possessed of an exquisite loveliness, which charms the eye the first moment they are beheld; and if there be some which at first sight seem to be defective in beauty, this, it will ultimately be found, is a seeming only, and attaches not to the object when viewed as a product of nature, and an integral part in the grand whole, but only to the limited, or possibly the false view which we are taking of it.

In proportion as science extends our comprehension of nature, her beauties multiply upon us; and if science were competent to embrace the whole economy of nature, doubtless we should find all nature, when viewed as a whole, to be truly beautiful. Nor this only. Every object in particular, when regarded as in its own place, in the grand panorama of universal nature as its frame or setting, we should find to be a perfect picture or gem—just what it ought to be for the place where it is hung up or set in—and not better calculated to satisfy the reason by the account which it has to give of its production, the conditions of its existence, and the ends which it serves, than to please the taste by the forms and colours which it presents to the senses. This is beautifully verified by the eye of the man of science, when compared with that of the uneducated observer. There are thousands of species in all the three kingdoms of nature, which to the vulgar eye seem worthy of no notice, either for their beauty or for anything else, while yet to the naturalist they are invested, every one of them, with a thousand charms.

Nay; it is not too much to affirm, that it belongs to science, absolutely to eliminate the reproach of ugliness from nature altogether, and to vindicate for her every production the attribute of beautiful. Not but there is among the productions of nature, and will ever continue to be, many an object, which, when one first fixes upon it individually, and views it apart from its proper relations in nature, and therefore, as in relation with himself and his own humanity (which in these circumstances he is obliged to do), he instantly and spontaneously stigmatises as ugly and offensive. But let him only sink his own egotism, and contemplate that object in its own relations, as Nature presents it to herself, and discover the part which it plays in the economy of nature, or the blank which it fills in the series of forms to which it belongs, and he will not be long in changing his feelings in regard to it, and possibly in coming to look upon it with peculiar favour, and to find in it a special charm.

But why, it may be asked, if science, if knowledge, thus finds all nature to be intrinsically beautiful, why should there be in nature any objects which should strike ignorance as ugly and offensive? Ignorance! the name sounds ill; but the thing, what is it but an innocence not yet sophisticated by instruction—the innocence of the child? And nature, if she be the mother of us all, and all so beautiful in herself as is now maintained, why should she repel her own child from her own bosom? Of all our faculties, is not the taste that one which is most easily warped? And with regard to the ugly and the offensive in nature, is there not reason to apprehend therefore that the man of science has ceased to regard them as such, not because they have ceased in any sense to be such, but because his taste has been spoiled by his speculations?

This is a very interesting suggestion, and is worthy of a little elaboration at our hands, which, therefore, let us not refuse. It touches, indeed, on the difference between the beautiful itself and the perception of beauty—an inquiry which it would be premature to enter on now; but without any preluding in metaphysics, or indeed any digression at all, the difficulty may we believe be solved. The fact of the existence of the Ugly in nature may be admitted, yet, without disparagement to the doctrine that ultimately, and to the eye of intelligence, all nature is beautiful. Nay, let it not be deemed a paradox, if we affirm that because of the existence of the ugly in nature, the beauty of nature as a whole is enhanced; and that not merely as the beauty of a concord is enhanced by the seasonable introduction of a discord, but because of what ugliness is in itself, and because of the purpose it serves.

The ugly and offensive has in fact its office, its theory, as well as the beautiful, and let us not scruple to affirm that that theory, that office is beautiful. The existence of the ugly in nature is no less an evidence of the moral beauty of the mind of the Creator than the existence of the Beautiful. It affords special evidence of his condescension, and of the care which he takes of the helpless, the ignorant. By this provision, in fact, by the institution of the ugly and the offensive in nature, He drives the ignorant, through the use of their senses, away from objects which reason in them has not as yet strength enough to teach them to avoid; while to reason he has awarded this prerogative, that when she exists in power, and can contemplate in her own light the object which at first sight offended the sense, that object ceases thereafter to do so, and falls pleasingly into its place, in an economy which is found to be universally beautiful and soul-delighting.

But let us give an instance or two. And let us not mince the matter. That filth, that offal, that insect, do you say? Tell us not, with these things intruding themselves upon us, that both all nature and her every production is beautiful! Well. The case, it must be confessed, is a hard one; but yet we cannot give it up. Not that we will undertake to commend the appearance of the objects you have named, or to bring you to admire them. That would be ridiculous. But we will promise to reconcile you to their existence, to engage you to admire when you think of them, and to hold them as a most successful accomplishment of a beautiful institution in nature.

Thus, as to the first, it is to be remarked that, after food has once yielded up to the animal which has eaten it, all the nourishment which it contained, it can, of course, be of no further use in that way; and if it should be proposed to use it as food again, it could not but prove injurious. That the remains of digested food, therefore, should be placed in such relations with our organs of sense as we find them to be, and thus be voted into seclusion by their physical characters, and, in a word, that they should be ugly and offensive to sense, is it not a benevolent provision, nay, a provision which we need not hesitate to call intellectually beautiful? But if objects of this kind are to have such a character, many others will be involved in the same condemnation; for the mind, in its ordinary habits of thought, proceeds by a method of indiscriminate generalisation; and in consequence of this, not only those substances which have actually passed through the bodies of animals, and yielded up their nourishment to the process of digestion, but many other substances, all in fact which look like them, however different they may be in their inner constitution, will be looked upon as ugly and offensive likewise. Sense, in her ignorance of the reality of things, repudiates much that has really nothing against it; but reason, like nature herself, which speedily transforms the remains of the digested food of animals into the most beautiful forms of the vegetable kingdom, finds only that which is worthy of admiration in all that nature presents.

The ugliness of the offal of animals, sores, and broken skin generally, is to be explained on the same principle. They are all clothed in an offensive dress, through a benevolent design to lead us, by the disgust which the sight of them produces, to do what we can to preserve in its integrity the skin, which is one of our most important and vital organs, and so to keep these blemishes under. They are also monitors in the interest of benevolence, designed to lead us to assist and to relieve those who suffer from them.

With regard to insects, the disfavour they are looked upon by many is to be similarly explained. Thus, the general order at the first creation, to the effect that every region of nature should bring forth the living creature abundantly, issued in this, that whereever sentient existence is possible, there it can be said that it exists. And from this there results an amount, and a general diffusion of enjoyment through all nature, which it is delightful to contemplate. But from this, it also fully appears that there must sometimes result no small inconvenience and embarrassment. Thus, if animals are to exist wherever animal life can be maintained, then, doubtless, some species of animals will be found whose nature it will be to inhabit the bodies of other animals. And this plainly cannot but be, in many cases at least, a serious discomfort to the latter. What then, if, in the eyes of all species that are liable to be attacked and infested by parasitic animals, this class of creatures should be held to be ugly and offensive? Shall we accuse nature of a want of beauty on this account? No; plainly it is her regard to beauty of a higher order that has led her to put these creatures in disgrace. Here, then, do we not find, as before, a provision which, though it imply the production of physical ugliness, is yet in itself intellectually beautiful? Yes; by withholding a lower order of beauty from certain objects, which it is desirable to discourage, a higher order of beauty secures its own existence everywhere. It is true, indeed, that the same habit of indiscriminate and spontaneous generalisation which has been already referred to, comes here again into play, and generates prejudice in the uneducated, to the injury of nature, and of their own enjoyment of it. Because of the antipathy which has been established by the Creator, in his wisdom and goodness, between certain species, and the insects which tend to live as parasites upon them, the whole insect world has not unfrequently been voted to be abominable. That such a judgment, however, has no ground in reason or in good taste, will be at once admitted. If the entomologist be consulted, he will repudiate the thought, and affirm, on the contrary, that of the whole animal kingdom, the insect world is the most exquisitely beautiful.

And here we may remark, that if the question as to that region of nature where the most beautiful objects are to be found be put to any naturalist, he is sure to answer that they lie within his own elect province. The mineralogist finds them among crystals; the botanist finds them among plants; the florist among flowers; the ornithologist among birds; the ichthyologist among fishes—each among his own. And nothing more than this, surely, can shew at once the depth and the diffusion of beauty in nature when the eye that contemplates her has been duly qualified by science for the high engagement. Nor is there anything deceptive in these various inferences as to the predominance of beauty in every region of nature. If a just view be taken either of those sensibly offensive objects which have been noticed, or of any which appear to us to be ugly, it will invariably be found that their ugliness is relative merely. It is only when they are viewed as substances or organised beings, in relation with ourselves as substances or organised beings also, that they are ugly. There are certain resemblances and certain differences between them and us, or their organs and forms and ours, which, adopting ourselves or our own as the standard and the type, we pronounce to be ugly. This is the only sanction of the unfavourable inference. Hence it is, for instance, that we regard the monkey and the toad as offensive. We view them both in reference to the human form as the standard of beauty, and noticing how sadly their every limb and feature fall short of those of humanity, we pronounce them to be ugly. And so in other cases. It is all because we look out from our own organisation as our stand-place and palace of æsthetic beauty, that anything we look upon is ever found wanting. Let us but forget ourselves, and instead of comparing other species with ourselves, other forms with our own, let us view them all, each in its own place in nature, and in its true relations with the series of forms it belongs to, and it will be found that there is not a single species, not a single form in nature that could be dispensed with; and that every object, when in its own place in nature, is both better there than if it were wanting, or if anything else, which the finest imagination could propose, occupied its place.

Nor do these remarks apply only to minute objects, such as we happen to have touched upon. Let anything be looked at where it stands, and viewed in reference to its place in nature, and its function in her economy—not to our convenience or partialities—and all is beautiful, transcendantly beautiful, the desert as well as the oasis, the wilderness as well as the garden, the precipice and snow covered mountain as well as the grass covered hill joyful with flocks. In fine, if we had but reach of mind enough to take an all-embracing view of the universe, we should find that all was supremely, all perfectly beautiful.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE PRIMAL SOURCE OF THE BEAUTIFUL (GOD).

MATERIAL NATURE is the grand treasury and storehouse of beauty for the artist and the general admirer. But beauty is not confined to material nature. Beauty has the run of the universe, and makes its apparition everywhere. The spiritual world, the realm of thought and feeling, is capable of a beauty not lower, nay infinitely higher than any to which mere material nature can aspire. Yes; and up to the full extent that ORDER, that is, truth and goodness, reigns there, this higher mode of beauty the spiritual world actually possesses.

It is indeed generally suspected, and there can be no doubt that the suspicion is well founded, that material nature owes its peculiar beauty, not to its own mere matter or materialism, but to something spiritual, of which its forms and movements are symbolic or expressive. It is impossible to look upon nature anywhere that she delights the soul with her beauty, without feeling that there is in her more than meets the eye. Not a cloud can arise in the valley or roll down the mountain, not a leaf can rustle in the forest, not a beautiful or majestic form can present itself to us anywhere, but we feel as it were the presence, nay the impress of a spirit manifested there, either seeking to overawe us, or courting to commune with us. In a word, the bosom of material nature heaves everywhere with the breath of the spiritual. Nay, a voice from it, still and small indeed, but yet distinctly audible, whispers from every light and shadow, every height and depth, and diffuses itself in the breeze over sea, and earth, and sky.

Every object and phenomenon in Nature is not merely the solid or sensible thing it is, as a part of the material system, but is expressive of something else; and that something else, be what it may, always refers itself to the spiritual world at last. It may be feeling, or it may be intelligence, it may point to the realm of goodness or to the realm of truth, but here, at all events, it is, and here only it has its home—in the spiritual world. That little group of snowdrops, overtaken and almost covered by another fall of snow—those violets, diffusing fragrance all around, while yet, in order to be seen, they must be sought for—where lies the charm of their beauty? Is it in their chemical composition—their mere materialism? No; but it is in their forms and the conditions of their existence, because they are expressive of certain moral qualities. The drooping of the flower in the one and its concealment in the other, are expressive of modesty, whilst the appearance of both amidst the driving snows and chilling blasts of the coming spring, is expressive of perseverance in the midst of difficulties; and this is a character which, when associated with modesty, possesses the charm of the highest order of moral beauty. We are thankful to these little flowers therefore—we admire and love them, because they awake such thoughts in us—not as in these words, indeed, articulately expressed, but effectually felt, and fully enjoyed, both for pleasure's own sake, and for the improvement of the heart.

By such explanations, it may indeed be said that all beauty is a creation, all a fiction of the human mind, material objects coming to be beautiful and expressive of the spiritual, only because of our own associating power, and because we clothe them with our own thoughts and feelings, which, forgetful of their source, we regard as emanating from the objects. And thus may the entire theme of the Beautiful be excluded from the domain of positive science, and discharged as merely one of the many forms of egotism by which we deceive ourselves—man here, as usual, holding himself still to be, as astronomers held the world till the time of Copernicus—as the centre of the universe. But this exaggeration of the value of association in the theory of beauty we need not now discuss. If the views advanced in the following pages be received, the association theory will contract itself to its just dimensions of its own accord. Let it be here taken for true, if the reader be disposed, or let any other view whatever be adopted, still, in accordance with what has been affirmed, thought and feeling must be resorted to as the last words which the beholding of the Beautiful suggests. Nor does it matter when our aim is to find the ultimate source of that thought, that feeling, whether we regard nature as directly symbolizing, expressing, or teaching it, as her own appointed lesson and language to us, or ascribe its whole authorship to our own minds, drawn into a necessary train of congenial associations at the sight of nature. In both cases equally, in order to explain the phenomenon, we must have recourse to thought and feeling in some source higher than either nature or the human soul. Nature is not self-created, self-constituted. Epicurus, low as he is in many points besides, fell quite below himself when he attempted to make out that it was. Nature is altogether a thing of creation and of law. Nature is just what it has been made or been caused to be; and it teaches and expresses just what it has been appointed to teach and to express. Nor is the soul of man, any more than nature, a thing original or of its own making. Nay, when considered as the subject of perception and emotion, that play of thought and feeling which the beholding of the beautiful awakens, the soul is as much a thing of law as material nature is. To account for the existence and phenomena of either nature or the soul, a creator, a supreme lawgiver must be had. If there be, as it appears there is, a responsiveness and agreement between them, this only proves the unity or sameness of the creator of both. But if we refuse to grant a creator then all remains an incomprehensible mystery; and indeed there is an end of all philosophy It matters not, then, when our inquiry is into the primal or original source of beauty, whether it be in the external object which nature supplies, or in the soul that gazes outwardly with delight upon nature, that beauty makes its most immediate apparition to us. The Idea of beauty, the Beautiful in essence, must be in the creative mind. God himself must be the prototype, the primal source of Beauty.

Creation is indeed in a certain sense possible to man. In so far as he bears the image of God, man possesses a certain portion of original, innate, or proper power; and this he can not merely make use of and carry out in mechanical action, but shape and develope also into thoughts and feelings, which are to be regarded as strictly his own. But let him create in this way what he will, universal experience proves that he cannot originate the Beautiful. In order to its production by man, he must banish altogether the creations of mere personal power or volition. Going, as it were, out of himself and forgetting himself, a man must, if he is to succeed here, commit himself to nature; he must seek and find communion with her spirit; and grasping some one or other of her typical forms or conceptions, that and that only must he venture on expressing, if he is to realize the beautiful. The pencil, the chisel, the lyre, the voice—either or all of these as instruments of expression a man may command as he pleases; but if he is to produce the beautiful, he must beware of overstepping the modesty of nature. The artist follows in her footsteps, attempting as best he can, through the inspiration of genius, to realize some one or other of those ideals which have obviously been set by the creator before nature as her aim, but which, through stress and strain of materials, hard labour, bad weather, and other relations, she cannot construct in all the simplicity of individual beauty. There is nothing in the world more certain than that any composition, be what it might, if only it were a pure creation of the human will or fancy, inasmuch as in that case it must needs be a singular object, would be as strange as it were singular, and as ugly as it were strange. The soul of man can create the beautiful only when thinking, feeling, suggesting, and constructing according to law, only when volition is flowing in the channels of reason, and imagining accordingly.

But let her do so, the soul finds herself anticipated in everything by the great creator. The Beautiful, in every case that she has succeeded in producing it, proves to be but an imitation. To find the source of the Beautiful, therefore, we are guided on all hands to the author of all. And that beauty must have its source in Him, is an inference urged by so many arguments, that nothing could forbid it, unless haply there were something in the nature of beauty which forbade us to associate it with God as its fountain. But so far is this from being the case, that the beautiful has always been classed along with the true and the good, among the things which are most divine.

Nor is it only in beauty itself that its heavenly origin appears, but in the delightful emotion also which the beholding of beauty awakes in the breast; for of this emotion it certainly is the nature to aggrandise itself the longer it is entertained, and to rise in feeling from admiration to adoration, to reach from the object which awoke it to the author of all, and in God alone to find a haven and sabbath for contemplation. And hence the reason, perhaps, why such sensibility to beauty was implanted in the human breast; for had it been enjoyment merely, and not moral improvement also which the creator designed to confer upon us, this end might have been accomplished more simply by the presentation in nature everywhere of agreeable objects merely, such objects as flattered the senses merely. But in actual nature, over and above such objects as are merely agreeable, beautiful objects abound—objects which, besides flattering the senses, invoke the aid of reason also to pass judgment upon them. And is it at all unlikely that reason has thus been brought into the field expressly that she may lead the soul during the enjoyment of the beautiful object, from that object to its author—from nature to God? For it is in the contemplation of God alone that reason can find a final resting place, and the soul be fully happy.

It is, moreover, certain that the intellectually beautiful is beautiful in a higher sense than merely material objects ever are; as also that the morally beautiful possesses all the beauty that is in the intellectual, and something more. But of these orders of beauty—the intellectual, the moral—no doubt God is the supreme source and fountain. To God, therefore, we are ultimately led by every hypothesis as to the origin of beauty. And this conclusion is a truth, which, though at first sight it may seem to be too general and too remote from every practical application to be of any real value in the domain of taste, it is yet at all times most desirable to know, to remember, and to confess; for it tends to exalt all our conceptions, and ennoble all our aspirations, while it sheds over every scientific inquiry an air of peculiar sacredness.

It may indeed be said that God, being infinite in his being and his every attribute, is too transcendant to be fitly designated by the term which corresponds to admiration merely. And this may be admitted, especially since the term glorious is at hand, which has for its peculiar office to express the divine beauty of the Godhead. The question here, however, is not about names, but about things; and may we not lay it down as most certain, that if there be a God at all, then all the beauty which we behold, whether in the sphere of material nature or in the true or the good, whether in humanity or in the spiritual world, are but irradiations from Him in whom the Beautiful in all possible power and purity constellates. An almighty will, reposing in the serenity of an omniscience which implies the most perfect wisdom, the most profound knowledge of all things both actual and possible, and existing in the possession of an ever-blessedness which is essentially diffusive, and which, therefore, constitutes the most perfect benevolence—such a conception, inadequate though it necessarily be, suggests an object, a being, in beauty, in glory so transcendant, that, could we but behold him, we feel that we should be contemplating the Beautiful, the glorious, in its architype and fountain.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE ACTUAL SOURCE OF THE BEAUTIFUL (THE LAWS OF NATURE).

HOLDING still to material nature as the grand storehouse and treasury of æsthetic beauty, we are enabled, by the conclusions of last chapter, to come to close quarters with the inquiry as to where the actual forms and lineaments of beauty lie, and what they are. For although God doubtless possesses now and for ever all that perfect freedom of will that He ever possessed in any conceivable moment of a bygone eternity, yet nothing is more certain than that, in the material creation which actually exists around us, He manifests his will only in uniform modes of procedure, only in the existence, the operation, and the products of law. There have, indeed, been epochs or moments (for one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day), during which He has acted otherwise, as, for instance, at the first creation, and at times when miracles were needed. But as to the ordinary course of things, all men are agreed that it is by law; and great reason of thankfulness have we that it is so; for had it been otherwise, neither experience nor science would have been possible. If, then, God be the primal fountain of the Beautiful, and God manifest himself in material nature only in the laws of nature and their products, the Beautiful must be associated with these laws and products, and make its appearance in nature in virtue of them and in them. It must accompany their operation. It must grace their productions. It must be most eminent where they are most successful and triumphant; and it will tend to forsake the objects in which they are in conflict, or exist in contradiction of each other.

If, then, natural philosophers are in a condition to inform us what those forms and lineaments are which the laws of nature tend generally to produce, then these we may expect to be the principles of æsthetic beauty. With these, at all events, we may go forth upon the observation of nature, with good reason to hope that we are in possession of a key which will open her charms to the eye of science.

The modern Baconian will, indeed, object to such a method. He tells us that we must go forth always, whenever we go forth at all, with an eye upon external nature quite free from all prepossessions, all anticipations, and hypotheses whatsoever. On these terms he requires us to discover the principles of beauty and everything else, or to be for ever silent. But we must be excused in pleading a want of strength for such a method. To us, every sense seems to lag irretrievably behind the thought, and to wait to be directed by it. Nor do we think that unless the senses, in their wanderings over the world, carry along with them those living embers of truth which reason possesses in her own right, philosophy will ever learn anything worth the knowing. It would, indeed, have been easy to suppress this confession, and to have concealed the method which we propose to follow; as also to have inverted it, and have seemed purely modern Baconian. And no doubt this ringing of the bells backwards is very successful in the present day in commanding the applause of the witlings. But plainly true philosophy ought to blush at the thought of such a device. Of all things, method should ever be held to be most sacred and inviolable; for it is of all things the most precious, being the mother of all discovery. And if it have been found by experience, that something more than mere observation, and thereafter an appeal to the logical faculty is needed, in order to the fruitful interpretation of nature, why not confess it, and give reason the audience, which in fact she insists upon? Bacon would have been the first to excuse, and to justify us for saying and for doing so; as also the first to recoil from that exaggeration of his method which, through the sanction of one or two great names, has unhappily stolen into English literature of late; and which, while it pretends to lead to positivism in all things, is, on the contrary, leading to utter emptiness, admitting, as it does, in the first instance, only those few things which can reach the soul through the senses, and upon these few operating thereafter by a method of vidification, whose real and entire import is expressed in the term reject. The process of rejection is indeed graced by the respectable name of generalisation. But be its name what it may, if it be a process of the logical faculty merely, and the material given for it to work upon be the data of the senses merely, it can never get into the nature of things deeper than the merest surface phenomena, and these it can only tear into shreds, and empty of all real contents and significancy. In order to reach the true philosophy of nature, the senses, however they may be assisted by the logical faculty, are not sufficient. Reason, with its affirmation of substance and cause, and all the other principles of common sense, must be also invoked.

Let not the reader infer, however, that this reclamation in favour of a method more rational than that which is popular in many quarters, is necessary as a defence of the conclusions which follow. Be it, as is generally believed, that the laws of nature, so far as they are known at all, have been discovered by mere induction, it matters not. Happily we have not to quarrel with any of them; but, on the contrary, we have simply to accept them as they are laid down for the acceptance of all.

What are the leading laws of nature, then, as they are manifested in their operation and products? That is the first inquiry for us—not for its own sake indeed, but with a view to the ulterior inquiry whether they be not also the principles and the producers of beauty.

But ere we proceed, we must here dwell a little on the distinction which has just fallen to be made with regard to the laws of nature, namely, their *operation* and their *products*. Its great importance was felt strongly by Aristotle, and appears largely in his writings. It is insisted upon by Bacon with much detail, and it has of late been reproduced as a novelty with great scientific eclat, by the author of the System of Positive Philosophy, as if it were its own, not in any affectation of originality, for he ascribes it to a friend, but in consequence of that *regime sevère* which he considered it his duty as a great discoverer to observe, with regard to the perusal of the works of preceding authors.* The two epochs in Nature, that of *operation* and that of *product*, the *dynamical* and the *statical*, we must take as the first fact for our analysis, and the laws of nature, when considered as the producers of the material system and of beauty, we must view accordingly; and, therefore, *first*, those forms and lineaments which are under change, and tending or pressing on towards those which are their end and aim; and *secondly*, those forms and lineaments which the former tend to, the resultant, the statical conditions of the same material. So important, indeed, in the theory of beauty is this point, that we shall here illustrate it by an instance or two.

Say, then, that it is the landscape that is the object of our æsthetic contemplation. The effect which it produces on the beholder, and the emotions which it awakens in his breast, cannot be understood or explained but by a reference to nature in the two epochs that have been referred to—the dynamical and the statical. Its mountains and ravines, its rain-clouds and its rivers, for instance, why are they felt to be so expressive and sublime—that is, why do they seem so animated and powerful? It is all because they are manifestations of the laws of nature in their dynamical epoch, whilst struggling to accomplish an end from which, however, they are always kept off. The laws of nature, as operating in the dry land in fact, however badly they may be succeeding in consequence of local irregularities in the action of the force that upheaves the mountains, and in the resistance of different kinds of strata to the action of air and water, yet have it always as their aim to reduce all to a portion of a sphere, which is the ultimate and statical form of a gravitating mass like the earth. They have it as their aim to reduce all the landscape to a level like the surface of the ocean.

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* Cours de Philosophie Positive, tom vi., Preface personelle par A. Comte.

And hence the value of the ocean, as well as of the landscape, to the poet or the painter, who aims at the embrace of the entire sphere of the beautiful, from that which is most full of animation, to that which breathes only of repose. When he desires to arouse the feeling of active life and living power, bent upon achievement or change, and consequently when he is portraying heroes, or communing with humanity in any of its manifold phases of activity, he must surround himself with the landscape, and paint those features in it which are expressive of the emotions he is bent on awakening, or which are kindred with them. But if it be not transient emotion that he aims at representing, if it be the idea of eternity and repose, or if emotion, then such as he desires to represent as eternal, he must appeal to the ocean. In pure science this characteristic of the liquid element, its stability as a whole compared with the dry land, has been finely set forth by Sir Charles Lyell in his geology. In poetry it has been exquisitely treated by Byron, in the closing stanzas of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage; while its value in sealing an emotion which, though naturally transient, has vowed its own eternity, is inimitably brought out by Homer, in the first book of the Iliad. On Agamemnon's triumph in having effected the restoration of the "fair-cheeked" Bryseis, the poet tells us that his hero Achilles, who never ceased to claim her as his reward, burning at the moment when she reluctant was led away, with a still deeper indignation than he had ever known before, betook himself to the sea-shore, and gazing on the deep, complained of the unrighteous conduct of Olympian Jove, regardless of his thunder. By making Achilles choose the companionship of the ocean at such a moment, the poet has secured for his hero's wrath such fixation in his breast and stability, that, without awaking the idea of softness in his character, he can even venture to make him shed tears, and stretch out his hands imploringly to his mother, and has thus succeeded in investing him with the gentler elements of humanity, without taking from the supremacy of the sterner. By the same procedure also, immediately after, by causing Thetis to appear on the bosom of the deep, the poet succeeds in clothing her with all the tenderest affection of a mother, without taking anything from her dignity as a goddess.

Suppose again that it is not nature on the grand scale, but some individual object, as, for instance, in vegetable nature, a plant or a tree that is the object of our regard, then similarly to explain the effect upon the taste of its trunk, branches, flowers, and whatever features are the expression of its growth and development, we must consider them as the manifestation of the laws of nature in their dynamical phase or epoch. The fully developed form, on the contrary, the plant, the shrub, the tree as a whole, as also, we may add, the fruit, the seed, the bud, &c., must be viewed as completed products and representatives of the statical, or of the laws of nature, as manifested in the ends they aim at. And so in other cases.

And thus the first conclusion to which our affirmation of the laws of nature as the producers of beauty leads us is this, that in nature we are to expect two orders of beauty, one corresponding to the dynamical, moving, or changeful aspect of nature, the other to the statical aspect, or that of accomplishment, stability, and repose.

And in this inference are we not favourably met and responded to by conclusions already fully arrived at in the science of æsthetics? Is it not generally agreed that there is in nature and art a beauty of two kinds—a beauty that is animated and expressive, and a beauty that is simple and speaks of stability only, in so far as it speaks at all—a beauty which seems dead, and does not interest the beholder as expressive beauty does, except when associated with objects of great grandeur, as for instance the orbs of heaven.

Directing our attention to this sort of *simple* beauty we may adduce as examples crystals and fruits, and not a few flowers and leaves, &c.; and among objects of art, tesselated and mosaic work, reticulations, lattice, and lace work, the rosace, and many other forms in architecture, the great majority of patterns in the ornamental designs of art, and emphatically the diagrams of the kaleidoscope. And since this instrument exists for no other purpose but to create beautiful combinations, we may after it name this order of beauty kaleidoscopic. What its principle is, it will fall to us afterwards to inquire.

As examples of the other order of beauty, the *expressive*, that which nature manifests in her dynamic epoch, her epoch of operation, we may adduce rugged nature, ruins, cliffs, ravines, groves, rivers, torrents, aged trees, ivy mantles, mountain scenery, clouds in a storm, the human form, the greyhound, horse, dove, vases, the ogee, scrolls, &c.

CHAPTER IV.

ON FIGURES OR FORMS AS ELEMENTS OF BEAUTY AND EXPRESSION.

THERE are then, if the preceding views be sound, two orders of beauty, the one such, that the more fully it is displayed the more does it imply stability and repose, and therefore the more does it seem inanimate; the other such, that the more fully it is displayed the more it is expressive of movement and change, and consequently of life, and consequently of thought and feeling, which we always associate with life.

Now, in approaching these two orders of beauty with a view to discover, if possible, the principles on which they depend, it is important to remark that in perception in general, whatever be the object, there are also two grand conditions which must be satisfied before a case of perception can be acknowledged or made out. These are space and time. Every object which will bear to be looked at, must have both a space in which it may exist, and a time during which it may exist. This is the first law of perception. But in this grand law do we not find a preparation and a ground for our two orders of beauty? Space, is it not in itself the symbol of stability and repose; and Time, is it not that of movement and change, and consequently of life, thought, and feeling. This might be easily shewn, but I am persuaded that it need not, for it will be universally felt. But if so, then we are to expect that *expression* will appear in those features in objects which awake the idea of succession or time, (which we shall afterwards find to be their continuous lines or contours), and that *simple beauty*, or the beauty of stability and repose, will appear in those features of objects which present themselves as occupying space, that is, in their figures or forms.

Now, of these two the latter is plainly the simplest, and therefore that which we may expect to be most easy of detection in its principle. Let us therefore address ourselves to it in the first instance; let us ask what are those general features of figure or form to which simple beauty attaches. And do we require a long investigation? Has it not by a very general consent been admitted that of this order of beauty *symmetry* is the principle. It may perhaps be said that *unity in variety* is more generally quoted. But between the ideas expressed by these different terms there is no difference. Unity in variety is merely a definition of symmetry.

Previously to our deciding, however, that symmetry is the principle of simple beauty, there is a question here which presents itself specially for us, namely, are we at liberty to do so ? are we at liberty to adopt symmetry as a principle of beauty ? We have committed ourselves to the laws of nature, and consented to accept as the principles of beauty whatever they give as their forms of operation and products, and unless the laws of nature give symmetry as a general characteristic of the products of the laws of nature, as well as general opinion give it as the principle of beauty, our case is plainly a bad one. We have no occasion to be uneasy, however. Not any respectable work on physics can be consulted, but we find in it forthwith that nature's grand *terminus ad quem*, the grand condition of equilibrium, stability, and repose in nature generally is symmetry. Every proposition in statics may be said to have this fact as its corollary, and from the entire science this is the general scholium.

But this state of things involves another. If the production of symmetrical objects be the aim of the laws of nature, and if the presentation of these objects indicates that nature has accomplished her aim, and that her work is over with respect to them, it follows that objects presented by nature when defective in symmetry, will imply that in reference to them she has not accomplished her aim, that in them she is still at work. They will therefore bespeak movement and change, and consequently life. They will, in more general terms, be expressive. And thus we find that expression, as well as simple beauty, may attach to objects in their relation to space, that is, to their forms and figures. And let us now in a few details, by an appeal to observation, endeavour to verify the inferences to which we have been led.

The problem to be solved may be thus stated. Given two beautiful compositions, constituted of similar elements, but such that one of them awakes only an emotion of simple or mere admiration, and seems no more than merely beautiful, while the other awakes a variety of emotions, and seems animated and expressive, it is required to investigate the principle of composition on which the aspect of simple beauty in the one case, and that of expression in the other, depends. That such a problem must have a field of solution in the nature of things, must be granted, if it be granted that objects composed of the same elements may present either the one or the other of these aspects to the taste. For if the elements or constituent parts of the objects be the same, then the difference of their aspects can depend on nothing else but the manner in which these elements are combined, that is, on nothing else but the composition.* And that there are in actual nature and art objects corresponding to this problem, will, I think, be readily perceived. Thus a garden Anemone and a Crocus, a Narcissus and a Snowdrop, are all flowers, and are all composed of the same elements. But the Anemone and the Crocus, with their highly coloured petals standing upright in the centre of their foliage, are simply beautiful, or merely pretty; the graceful Narcissus and the drooping Snowdrop, on the other hand, are expressive as well as pretty. A human head, with smooth skin and regular features, wanting the beard, and with the hair very regularly combed, is very pretty; but a similar head, with moustaches and imperial, as in the portraits of Vandyke, or with the whole beard, and the hair spiritedly thrown off, or flowing at random, is full of expression. A palace with a front of very regular and ornamented architecture, viewed along a street of the same character, is very beautiful; but the same palace or street, as it would be after a bombardment, earthquake, or any catastrophe which destroyed its formal appearance and regular structure, would be far more expressive. In a word, objects composed of the same elements may be either merely pretty and simply beautiful, on the one hand, or expressive and picturesque, or sublime, on the other; and this difference in their character, since it does not depend on the elements of which they are composed, must, in so far as it depends on their visible features at all, necessarily depend on the manner in which these elements are composed. To discover the principle of composition, then, on which simple beauty, on the one hand, and expressiveness or the Picturesque, on the other, depends, constitutes the problem now before us.

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* A proportion of my readers will of course decline to assent to what is here stated, being already prepared to refer all differences to association. But let me remark, this is to have recourse to the principle of association too soon. At present the inquiry is not into psychological principles, but into physical features; and, in reference to the theory of association, the present inquiry might be thus stated, What is the principle in composition which constitutes such an object as does not give birth to a train of congenial associations? and, What is the principle which constitutes another that does so?

And with regard to the former part of it at least, —the principle, namely, on which the aspect of simple beauty depends—it appears to me that but little requires to be said; both because there is a very general consent among those who have thought and written on it, and because I think every one who is competent to such inquiries may, by an easy analysis in his own mind, verify the principle alluded to, after it has once been stated. I will repeat at once, with the generality of writers on the subject of beauty, and, I trust, with the assent of the reader, that with regard to surface, *smoothness;* and with regard to structure, *regularity*, *repetition*, *radiation*, *equilibrium*, *balance of parts*, SIMPLICITY OF RATIO, *all of which I comprehend under the single term* SYMMETRY, *constitute the principle of composition by which the aspect of simple or mere beauty is developed.* This view, either expressed as now, or under the more philosophical formula of Unity in Variety, is to be found in most writers on this subject, both ancient and modern. If the reader be not convinced of its truth, let him examine any number of objects whose beauty is of that kind which I have called Simple Beauty, and whose character it is to please the eye very perfectly, but to leave all the feelings, except a simple superficial admiration, undisturbed, and he will always find that, whatever the variety of forms, colours, or sounds, displayed by the objects considered, there is this of agreement amongst them, that they are all very regularly and symmetrically composed. If, however, the number of objects examined be very varied and very great, he will find likewise, that, except in symmetry, some differ from others in every other respect. We are, therefore, left in possession of symmetry alone, as the principle in composition which gives to that composition the aspect of simple inexpressive beauty.

Nor is it by analysis only that this fact may be ascertained; synthesis is equally available. On attempting to design any object whose beauty is intended to be of the character now considered, it will be found that success always accompanies the projection of an orderly, regular, and symmetrical form,—provided, of course, that care be taken not to violate propriety, or any of those higher considerations to which the mind attaches more importance than to mere beauty. Not that such violation could destroy the beauty of symmetry, but it would displease, and thus unfit the mind for the discovery and appreciation of beauty at the time.

But that it is impossible, by mere symmetry of composition, to develope any other sort of beauty than that which I have called Simple Inexpressive Beauty, will be found equally true. Objects remarkable for their symmetry have a something in them which indicates either such a finiteness or such a perfectness, such a purely physical or such a purely intellectual constitution, that they are seen all at once, and ask nothing but the eye to look at them. The observer feels as if he understood them at sight; and thus, except a simple admiration, they leave all the emotions in that state of repose which naturally belongs to them when nothing solicits them to action. Hence in many treatises far too much is ascribed to symmetry. Some authors maintain, for instance, that order, regularity, uniformity, or unity in variety—in one word, symmetry—is the only source of all those pleasing emotions which in ordinary language are ascribed to the Beautiful. But if the view now advanced be correct, symmetry is the source of the simplest of these emotions only. It is the principle of simple inexpressive beauty only. Nay, in reference even to this, there are certain limitations that require to be imposed on the principle of symmetry. There are certain areas and lines in which there is a greater degree of beauty than in any other areas and lines; and symmetrical compositions consisting of these as their elements, may be much more beautiful than other compositions composed of other elements, though the general structure of the latter may be most symmetrical, as will I trust presently appear.

Meantime, let us pass to the consideration of the principle of composition, by which expressiveness, and consequently the Picturesque is developed. And here, let me ask at once, whether, in reference to Expression, we do not find a state of things directly the reverse of what we find in reference to mere Beauty? Yes; let the symmetry of any object viewed as an example of the beauty of inexpressiveness and repose, be conceived to be anyhow broken up, the uniform repetition of the parts, and their balance, to be destroyed or obscured; let this be done, and it will forthwith be found, that however much the geometrical and kaleidoscopic beauty of the object considered may have suffered along with the symmetry of its composition, a new element shall have made its appearance; the object, in losing mere Beauty, shall have acquired expression, and the aspect of feeling; from having been simply beautiful, it shall have become picturesque.

As an example, let there be taken any very fine and very symmetrical building, such as a Grecian temple, with the form of which every one is familiar, or say at once the church of the Magdalene at Paris, which is built upon the model of a Grecian temple, and which is certainly a most beautiful structure. Of this building, it is to be observed, that it is remarkably regular and symmetrical. There are, on all the four aspects, a series of beautiful columns, perfectly similar to each other; and each side and end, (allowing for the peristyle) is a repetition of the other side and end. The various parts of the building, and the whole, are in fine proportion; and every one who looks on it, exclaims, How beautiful it is! But the man of taste and feeling, in contemplating it, soon begins to find, that, however perfect its kaleidoscopic beauty may be, still it is, after all, hard and stony-looking; and that, though it excites an intense admiration at first, it ultimately rather seals than opens the fountains of the emotions. I do not know whether the Parisians themselves have this view of it, nor would I indeed expect that they should. For they are a people whose taste is peculiarly intellectual, and of whom, therefore, it is to be expected that they shall have a demand chiefly for what may be called geometrical beauty, and not for the Picturesque or the

Sublime, which derive their influence chiefly from the moral feelings.* The church of the Magdalene may, therefore, seem faultless in the eyes of those for whom it was built. But in characterising it as hard, I am adopting the opinion of good judges, and that which I should expect from the English reader on beholding it.

Such, then, being the character of the entire and highly symmetrical building, let it now be conceived that its extreme symmetry and regularity are relieved (as doubtless they would have been from the first had a Greek architect built it), by varying to a certain extent the designs of the entablature and the capitals of the columns; and does not the reader feel, that by such a relief of its symmetry, it has been softened in its aspect, and has more of the incense of feeling about it? Or if this hypothesis be too refined, let it be conceived that the whole symmetry of the building is destroyed by time, the mob, an earthquake, or any other agency adequate to the effect, and thus the beautiful symmetrical edifice reduced to the state of a ruin, displaying only interrupted columns and traces of symmetry like the Parthenon at Athens; and figuring it in the imagination in this dismembered and dilapidated state, does not the reader feel, that what it has lost in kaleidoscopic beauty, it has gained in expressiveness? Does not the eye now, instead of resting on its beautiful surface, or running gaily along its columns, which meet it as the building now stands, at every point where such a meeting is expected, rather enter as it were among its shadows, and dwell and brood there; and does not the soul feel as if addressed in a solemn tone by every shattered mass and every broken column?

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* See Considerations on the Sentiment of the Beautiful and the Sublime, by Emanual Kant; of which, besides the original German, there are several French translations.

But to illustrate the principle I am insisting on, it is not necessary to confine ourselves to an imaginary case. Are not ruins and half-raised structures, universally more expressive than highly-finished buildings? The Coloseum at Rome, for instance, what could surpass or even equal it in expression? No sooner do the august ruins of the enormous amphitheatre present themselves, than they begin to exert a power upon the beholder, and seem burdened with a weight of feeling and expression, which I am persuaded could attach to no entire elliptic building, (provided the whole could be embraced by the eye at once and without effort), though it were as vast as the orbit of

Saturn. No; whatever is perfect and symmetrical, has no power of decomposing the native entireness and repose of the mind, and consequently none to develope a train of emotions. A symmetrical structure is all seen in a moment, and is understood as soon as it is seen; and a pleasing admiration, (which, however, may be very intense and delightful), is all the emotion which it is calculated to awaken.

The effect of unsymmetrical objects is very different. A great variety of circumstances conspire to render them far more interesting to the mind. But let me avoid anticipating, by entering here on the psychological principle of the phenomena; and let the reader also remember, that though he should ascribe all the superior influence of the ruins, to the associations which they awake in him, this conclusion on his part, whether sound or unsound, does not interfere with any thing which I am at present endeavouring to establish. At present, nothing more is aimed at than a determination of the physical forms —the mode of composition—of those objects which are simply beautiful, and of those which are expressive, respectively.

And here, in further illustration of *the fact*, let us remark that it is not Ruins and Vast Objects only, when unsymmetrically composed, which possess a far greater power than when symmetrically composed, of developing a variety of feelings in the observer, and of seeming full of feeling and expression themselves. The difference of character in the two classes and objects extends even to the most minute. Thus an irregular group of Crystals, or a drusy cavity of an irregular form, is far more full of expression, one might even say far more picturesque, than a regular group. The Rose is far better entitled to the name of the queen of flowers when surrounded by the thorns and serrated leaves of the rose-bush, than when plucked and presented naked to the eye. A piece of dress thrown negligently on—a mantle on one shoulder, for instance—is far more picturesque than the same would be if symmetrically arranged; a beggar in rags far more than a gentleman or lady; and a rugged ass far more than a sleek horse. Nay, Marcus Antoninus, where he touches on this subject, curiously observes, that a loaf of bread whose form is irregular and crust rugged, looks particularly well, and is far more inviting to the appetite than one which is smooth and regular all over.*

But let us turn from these comparatively insignificant cases to the illustrations of the principle I am endeavouring to establish, which the higher walks of the fine arts display. And here, I hope to be able to shew that the great masters, though they may not all have recognised, or even been aware, in so many words, of the principle, *that symmetry in composition imparts the aspect of mere beauty and repose, departures from symmetry the aspect of animation and expression*, did, nevertheless, uniformly compose harmony with it. And, to begin with Raphael; How did he, let me ask, first shew his peculiar genius for expression? Was it not just by departures from the excessive symmetry which prevailed in the compositions of his master Perugino.* And how did he in his maturer years succeed in giving, as he pleased, to his heads, figures, and groups, the aspect either of a heavenly repose or of intense feeling? If his works be studied, it will be found that it was mainly by composing very symmetrically when he intended to express the idea of Repose; unsymmetrically, when he intended to express the aspect of Animation and Emotion. Look, for instance, at his great fresco in the Vatican, the Dispute of the Holy Sacrament, which, with the School of Athens, on the opposite wall, appears to me to be his greatest work of this kind. In the upper part of the composition there is a representation of a scene in heaven, of which the intended idea is plainly Repose; underneath there is a scene on earth, of such a nature that the intended idea is plainly a high degree of Animation. How, then, has Raphael treated this design, consisting of these happily contrasted parts? In the grouping of the figures of the celestial part, in the whole treatment of it indeed, he has composed so symmetrically, that this part has sometimes been called Gothic. In the terrestrial part, on the other hand, scarce any traces of symmetry can be discovered. Nor is it in this painting only that Raphael has shewn his knowledge (or intuitive feeling) of this great principle. He appears to have been almost universally guided by it. Look to the last—and according to the prevalent opinion—the greatest of his works, the Transfiguration. There, just as in the Dispute of the Holy Sacrament, the celestial or aërial part is very symmetrically composed, the terrestrial almost destitute of symmetry; coincident with which, does there not immediately awaken in the beholder an intuition that the scene on the top of the mountain is one of repose, light, and intelligence; the scene beneath, one of agitation and uncertainty?

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* *Meditations*, book iii. sect. 2.

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* See Histoire de la Vie et des Ouvrages de Raphael. Par M. Quatermere de Quincy. 2me edition, p. 397.

Nor is it in his Scriptural compositions only that Raphael illustrates this principle. Nor is the scene of repose, and the corresponding symmetry, always in the upper part of the design, as it is in those which have been noticed. Thus, in the fresco of Atila and Heliodorus, which is wholly a terrestrial scene, the group on the left, of which the idea is piety and repose, is composed in a high symmetrical arrangement; the rest of the composition, of which the idea is violent action and emotion, is wholly irregular. Nor let it be thought that such a mode of composition is due to accident. Such an unworthy supposition is wholly disproved by the fact, that wherever the repose is, whether in heaven or earth, or in both, *there* the composition is symmetrical: wherever the action or intense feeling is, *there* the composition is unsymmetrical. Thus, in the Madonna di Fuligno of the Vatican, all is intended to be repose, and accordingly, all is symmetry. In the Listening of St. Cecilia, the design is, that there should be more repose in the terrestrial than in the celestial group; accordingly, there is more symmetry in the composition of the former than the latter. In the burning of Borgo san Spirito, in the Vatican, on the other hand, all is action and emotion, and not a trace of symmetry of composition can be discovered. The same principle will be found illustrated in every other composition of Raphael likewise, and the more distinctly in proportion as he was unrestrained in the exercise of his genius. And consequently, in his mere designs, such as those he executed for the graver of Mark Anthony, it is to be found still more fully developed than in his great works, where the forms of walls, roofs, doors, windows, and the like, interfered with his pencil.

It may be remarked, however, that the cartoon of the Death of Ananias, of which prints are sufficiently common, serves very well to illustrate the whole principle. It is also one of those compositions in which Raphael, with inimitable art, represents, without any anachronism, two epochs simultaneously. He both represents the appaling scene at the time of the death of Ananias, and gives a distinct idea of the repose which reigned before he was charged with his crime. This effect the painter produces thus :—The group listening to the preaching of St. Peter, he disposes in a circle before him, which being viewed obliquely, appears of course as an ellipse, a form which, as we shall afterwards find, is entitled to be regarded as most beautiful. It is, however, a most symmetrical form. It belongs therefore to it to express repose. It is therefore most appropriate to the occasion, since we are informed that, at that time, "there was none of the disciples that lacked," "that distribution was made to every one as he had need," and "that they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch." Such was the state of things when the circle is supposed to have formed itself before the apostle. Then comes the time when St. Peter has addressed Ananias. And this the painter has seized as that of the principal action. Ananias has just fallen. His place is, justly, the most conspicuous. He is, therefore, appropriately introduced near the middle of the pavement, opposite the apostle. And here Raphael so completely breaks up the circle, and destroys all symmetry, that intense emotion and agitation are expressed by the form of the composition at this place. But in the attitude of St. Peter himself, and the holy men beside him, the original symmetry is wholly preserved. And thus the artist succeeds in communicating to the spectator, at sight, the knowledge that the death of Ananias was not an unlooked for or horrifying event to them, or one which destroyed their repose. On the other hand, the opening up of the ellipse in the opposite region, by shewing the columnar figures of the apostolic group, in which there is an unusual amount of repetition and symmetry, and which are proportionally full of repose, serves rather to illustrate the grandeur of their characters.

I have been thus minute in reference to Raphael, because his taste is so perfect and so comprehensive, he produces every effect so scientifically, and is so decidedly intellectual, that his works are peculiarly worthy of study in relation to the principles of Beauty. He is, besides, generally and justly considered as the greatest master in expression.

In reference to the works of Michael Angelo, likewise, it might be shewn, that in giving that expression of immense power which all his compositions display, he uniformly avoids symmetry. Nor let it be supposed that this arose from any inability on his part to appreciate symmetry, and the simple beauty which it imparts. His figures in the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, though there were nothing else, proves that scarcely had Raphael himself a finer eye for the Beautiful.

Look at the compositions of Rubens also, who, as well as Raphael and Michael Angelo, is to be regarded as a great and original painter. That he was educated in favour of symmetry of form, and the beauty which it imparts, may be fairly inferred from the character of the works of his master Otto Venius. But his own taste was all in favour of the expression of energy and exuberant life; and it is quite in vain to seek for symmetry in his compositions. In fact, his individual figures are often rather tortuous than handsome, and his groups are in all sorts of entanglements and motion; but never are they symmetrically distributed, either in relation to each other or the canvas. Such an arrangement would be quite unsuitable to beings so full of florid life and blood as those of Rubens.

Were it not for the inconvenience of protracting these remarks, it might be shewn that the same principle holds good in reference to other great painters also. By its aid the great inferiority of modern artists to the old masters might also be explained; and especially it might be shewn that the failure of the modern classical school of the Continent was a necessary consequence of the principles on which it was based. The idea of this school was to combine great beauty and symmetry of form on the one hand, with great energy and keenness of feeling on the other. But if the principles now advanced be true, these are things which are, in all ordinary cases, heterogenous and discordant, and unfit to be combined in a composition addressed to a pure taste. Nor is it difficult to perceive, that the attempt must in general give rise to compositions in which figures whose forms demand repose, and which are capable of expressing grace only, are thrown into violent action; and hence, that the consequence must be a want of harmony between the lines which constitute the contour of the constituent figures, and those of the attitude which express the action. The former must be wavy and flowing; the latter rectilinear and angular; and hence the compositions, however crowded, must still seem thin and wiry. And is not this the very character of the compositions alluded to,—the Romulus of David, for instance?

According to the principles now insisted on, simplicity of action and of attitude, grace and repose, ought to be the characteristics impressed upon figures full of symmetry and beauty. The modern classical school is merely an extension of the forms of sculpture beyond their proper sphere. Of these forms, since the cold marble in which they are embodied cannot go far to set them off, the most exquisite symmetry and beauty ought plainly to be the characteristics; and, therefore, according to the views here advanced, repose ought to be the expression. Accordingly, it is found that the Greek sculptures, which are universally admitted to be the most beautiful works the fine arts ever gave to the world, are not more to be admired for the exquisite symmetry of their forms, than for their deep repose. Their characteristics are a noble simplicity, and a tranquil grandeur, both in attitude and expression. A great variety of emotions is indeed expressed in them; but as the sea remains calm in its depths, however agitated its surface may be, so the Greek statues, though they always express a degree of feeling suitable to the action which they are represented as engaged in, shew also, by more deeply seated lineaments in their forms and attitudes, that that emotion is only momentary, and that repose and tranquil grandeur of soul is the constitutional and habitual form of their being.*

Having thus touched on those arts which treat chiefly of the human figure, let us turn for a moment to the phenomena which the human countenance displays in relation to the principle considered. And in reference to this, the masterpiece at once of beauty and expression, it will not be difficult to shew, that symmetry and expressiveness are invariably opposed to each other. Are not those who have the most regular and symmetrical, or, let me at once say, the most *regularly beautiful* countenances, generally the most inexpressive? The observation is common. And in proportion as a countenance lights up with animation and expression, what is the change that takes place? It will be found that it consists in an action of the muscles of expression, the effect of which is to relieve the formal symmetry of the countenance, and so to open and vary it. It will be found that, as the expression increases, the symmetry diminishes. And in fact expression becomes a maximum, when symmetry is a minimum. Hence the intense expression which convulsions impart. In them, the departures from symmetry are so great, as to amount to the most unnatural distortions; and, accordingly, the expression is often so violent, as to be distracting and distressing to the beholder in the highest degree.

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* See Winklemann's History of Art among the Ancients. Book IV.

The same principle is also very well illustrated by the hair of the head. Suppose the hair regularly braided or curled, or anyhow dressed and distributed very symmetrically, this ought, according to the principle now advocated, to be more simply beautiful than if it lay at hazard, as the wind or the hand, or a few dashes of the brush, had determined; and so it is. But while it is more beautiful, it ought to be very inferior in point of spirit and expression; and so it is. Accordingly, we see ladies of good taste, who are conscious that they can scarcely carry the aspect of simple beauty too far, or invest themselves with a greater charm than that which the idea of repose imparts, carry the principle of symmetry in the dressing of their hair, and indeed in their whole toilet, to a great height; while men of good taste, on the other hand, feeling that not beauty and repose, but spirit and energy, are the true elements of a manly expression, never wear long hair, nor their hair symmetrically arranged at all.

But in order to an illustration of this principle, it is not necessary to contrast the sexes. In different individuals of the same sex, very interesting differences may be observed; and in this way, a very fair estimate may often be made of the prevalence of boldness, or of diffidence in different individuals, or the same individual at different times. Thus, directing our observations to the fair sex, whose sensibility and painstaking in such matters are naturally greater than those of men, it will be found that ladies whose characteristics are repose and gentleness, are careful to have everything about them very regularly formed and symmetrically put on, their rings and bracelets duly distributed, and their hair dressed with great regularity. Those, on the other hand, in whom spirit and a certain daring are strong, may be generally observed to like to have as many things as possible thrown to the side, their hair dressed as freely, negligently, and, so to speak, as picturesquely as possible, and other things in the same way. It may be also observed, that some whose temperaments embrace the characteristics of both the others, and who are at first sedate, and afterwards more animated and daring, make their entré as symmetrically attired as may be; but in proportion as they become animated by conversation, the dance, or other social amusement, throw to the side such parts of their dress as admit of it, and give "the sweet neglect" to their appearance and movements. Nor are such actions to be regarded as the result of study, nor to be ascribed to coquetry. In some cases it may be so, but Nature prompts to them; and, generally speaking, they ought to be regarded as done unconsciously, and as the spontaneous results of a beautiful law, deep-seated in the sensibilities, and whose action is always to tend (so far as art and the usages of society permit), to keep the aspect of the figure, a true index of the existing state of the feelings.

Such illustrations of the principle in composition which I am endeavouring to establish, might be increased almost to any amount. It is in the Landscape most especially, however, that the finest examples are to be found; for the landscape is peculiarly the province of the Picturesque. No doubt there, as indeed every where else, much depends on the contour of the component parts of the composition, and consequently on elements, to the investigation of which we have not yet arrived. But so much depends on composition likewise, that one may easily satisfy himself that nothing so surely developes the Picturesque (the parts being supposed adequate to its production) as a certain rough and disorderly arrangement, in which there is none of that smoothness, repetition, and regular opposition, in which symmetry consists.

Imagine, for instance, two rivulets, which in the same distance fill the same space, flow in the same direction, bear on their banks the same sort of trees, herbage, and mosses, and, in a word, agree in every respect except in this, that the one runs in a regular descent, or a series of similar pools, ripples or cascades, between banks whose opposite sides always correspond, and instead of being alternately salient and re-entrant, are both either salient at the same time, or both re-entrant; while the stream and banks of the other are free from every trace of such symmetry; and is it not obvious that the irregular stream would be far more Picturesque, and full of feeling and expression, than the regular one?

The same principle is also very fully demonstrated by gardening. Look at two gardens, one laid out in the old geometrical fashion, or Dutch style, the other laid out in the English or natural style; what a difference in expression! How puerile and insignificant is the geometrical style compared with the free! The symmetrical composition refuses to have the aspect of animation and expression induced upon it, even when the avenues are stuck thick with statues, and the trees cut into the forms of peacocks. It may be said, perhaps, that the unsymmetrical garden is expressive and picturesque, because it is natural; the other formal and fantastical, because it is contrary to nature. And this is indeed a great truth, which I am very far from denying. But to introduce such remarks here is to anticipate. At present no inquiry is made whether it is association that makes ruins more picturesque than entire buildings, or the imitation of nature that makes English gardening more picturesque than Dutch gardening. At present we are engaged only in attempting to establish the circumstances in composition,—the physical features only in which the two classes of objects, the inexpressive and the picturesque, differ.

But enough of this. It is time to discover and lay down, if we can, for the purposes of art and æsthetic criticism, some simple figure or diagram which may possess such properties as will enable it to be useful in the construction of such forms and compositions as shall be at once in the highest degree beautiful and expressive, and to measure and analyse those which the inspiration of genius has presented to the delighted gaze of the beholder. And of such a diagram or scale, these two conditions at once appear as requisites ; *first,* if it is to be truly elementary and as simple as possible, it must be a triangle ; and, *secondly,* if it is to assist in the construction and production of expressive, as well as merely kaleidoscopic beauty, it must be defective in symmetry as well as be symmetrical. Such a condition may, at first sight, seem a contradiction and a paradox. But it is not so. It is, on the contrary, a problem having a positive solution available for the fine arts which was discovered in ancient Greece in the age of Pericles, if not before it. For its application in cosmogeny the reader is referred to the beautiful speculations in the Timæus; here we merely take it in its geometrical characters, viz., as the right-angled triangle (see Plate I. Figs. 1, 2, 3, 4), whose angles are to each other as 1 : 2 : 3, whose longest side is double the length of the shortest, and the square of the other side three times that of the shortest. It is therefore a triangle which, rationally considered, is eminently symmetrical, possessing so many parts in simple ratio with each other; and yet, to the senses, it appears quite unsymmetrical, no two sides nor angles being similar to one another. But to this triangle let us not fail to add, and also to admit, after Plato, as an element of the Beautiful, the isosceles right-angled triangle or half square. The former, however, the Greek philosopher shews to be by far the most fruitful in beauty. And, indeed, we immediately obtain from it the following series of figures, diagrams, or spaces, which, considered as frames or tangents, will be found to be the fittest of all that can be used for determining the forms of such lights and shadows, and such groups and compositions generally, as are destined to secure for themselves the charm of beauty. The triangle of beauty admits of many positions, of which the four principal are Figs. 1, 2, 3, and 4. And these form the frames, or measure in a general way, many of the most beautiful compositions; as, for instance, Fig. 1, the Cupid of the Vatican; Fig. 2, Nestor defending Antilochus; Fig. 3, the Dying Gladiator; Fig. 4, the Theseus of the Parthenon, or the Nile in the Vatican here represented. In basso-relievos, this simple form is peculiarly serviceable. Canova seems to owe at once the extreme beauty of his compositions of this kind, and their want of variety to his strict adherence to this as his formula. As examples may be mentioned, his Crito closing the eyes of Socrates, Mercury consigning the infant Bacchus to the Nymphs in the cave of Niseus, Hercules shooting his sons, the Death of Adonis, &c. His finest basso-relievos are, in fact, all composed after the model of that ancient painting in the Vatican, known by the name of the Nozze Aldrovandine. Like that beautiful relic of antiquity, they all consist of a principal group which is accurately measured by this triangle, and of two supporters or accessory groups, one on each side. Some of the beautiful works of Thorwaldsen are also illustrations of the same mode of composition. It is very interesting to observe, however, that this greater sculptor generally composed in the first combination of this triangle, that is, in a frame formed by a couple, to consider which let us now proceed.

Plate II. shews this simplest combination of the beautiful triangles of Plato. It consists of two united by their longest sides, of which the principal positions are also four, namely, Figs. 1, 2, 3, 4. These, and their halves (their contours being duly bent), measure or frame to a remarkable extent the regions of the human form—capital, cervical, thoracic, pelvic, &c.—as may be seen from the inspection of the central figure in Plate II. And by varying the ratios and adjustment of them one to another, yet preserving the analogy throughout, the style and expression of the human form resulting can be very successfully varied to a wonderful extent. In the position Fig. 3, this quadrilateral frames many of the most famous works of art, as the Laocoon; the Centaur in Nero Antico in the Capitol, Plate III.; the battles of Centaurs and Lapithæ, and other equestrian subjects generally. The centaur is particularly well suited to shew its value; for surely there is something so unnatural, nay, so monstrous in such a conception, that great art of composition must be employed to render it even passable to the eye.

This may, however, be done; and that most successfully; as it will be generally admitted that it has been, in the centaur represented in Plate IV. And that this triumph of art wholly arises from the *coup d'œil* of the entire subject considered as a composition given to fill the eye, and consequently on the figure or form of that composition, may be at once proved, simply by supposing the attitude to be changed. And let but the uplifted arm be disposed of anyhow otherwise than it actually is, or the positions of the feet or tail be so shifted that these four salient points shall no longer coincide with the angular places determined by our formula, Fig. 3, Plate II., and not only will the centaur become generally displeasing, but in most cases offensive, and even monstrous. This quadrilateral is also of the greatest value in painting, as indeed Mr. Burnet has very successfully shewn in his works, though not under the definite conception here given. In Fig. 4 we have a frame for the beautiful painting by Etty in Edinburgh (Woman interceding for the Vanquished, Plate III). The painter, however, generally requires to put our quadrilateral in perspective, as with him it generally requires to lie more or less horizontally. But when thus laid, its angles give the best positions for the heads or leading objects in a group, when the subject does not demand more nor fewer than four; and in this way in all the groups of the greatest works, it will be found that the heads are disposed. Figure 6, Plate II., is the combination of two of Plato's triangles united by their intermediate sides, giving the equilateral triangle; whose genesis Plato however derives from the union of three of the combination represented in Figs. 1, 2, 3, 4, their obtuse angles being united in a centre, Fig. 7—a construction which is certainly more elegant And in the equilateral triangle as a frame, it is sometimes desirable to compose, as, for instance, when the subject is a magnificently draped figure in a sitting posture (the queen, for instance, on her throne, or a mother with children hanging round her, a pieta, &c.) But it is defective in variety.

Figs. 8 and 9 arise from the combination of four of the original triangles so united as to reproduce a quadrilateral, but with a higher degree of symmetry. We may therefore expect this figure to be a great favourite of the eye. It is, in fact, the rhombus, lozenge, or diamond of common conversation.

And here let us for a moment forget our theory, and the process by which we have arrived at it, and simply ask the eye what figures it finds to be most agreeable to it, and how it feels as to the lozenge. Does the reader question whether there be any areas or angles which are more beautiful than others? To this it may at once be answered, and with equal promptness, that if angles and areas be capable of beauty at all, there is a difference among them in this respect. Looking at a succession of compositions in a kaleidoscope, for instance, it will be soon perceived, that while the amount of symmetry remains, so far as can be observed, the same in all, the beauty varies with their angular structure. Hence the problem, What is the angle, or what are the angles which, in virtue of their own power, or that of their multiples or submultiples, may be regarded as the most influential elements in imparting beauty to angular compositions? To the investigation of this problem let us now proceed.

And for its solution, nothing could be more satisfactory than to appeal to direct experiment, and out of a great variety of angles and areas placed before the eye, to call upon it to name those which it approves of as most beautiful. It may be questioned, however, with respect to angles at least, whether the eye has sensibility to beauty sufficient to enable one who is free from prepossession to prefer one angle to another as more beautiful, at least when viewing them simply as angles. For my own part, when I take two sheets of opaque pasteboard, and having pinned them together at one point, then open them like a pair of scissors, holding them between the eye and the sky, so as to impress my vision with a series of mere angles, my eye arrests the process among the acute angles at two, which I regard as most beautiful, and which prove to be as nearly as could be expected half the right angle and the angle of the equilateral triangle respectively; then again at the right angle; and, lastly, among the obtuse angles, at one which proves to be the double of the angle of the equilateral triangle, or 120°. I am unable to say, however, whether the superior beauty with which those angles seem to me to be invested, be not wholly due to an intellectual perception of their importance, and consequently to my prepossession in their favour; and I anticipate no general satisfaction from the attempt to test by the eye the relative beauty of mere angles viewed directly.

Let us, therefore, not dwell upon this experiment, but proceed a step farther; and, instead of mere angles, let us try the sensibility of the eye to the relative beauty of a suit of simple angular areas. Among such figures it has, if I mistake not, a natural disposition to discriminate. Here, therefore, we may expect to find its sensibility sufficient. And in order to conduct the experiment satisfactorily, let a sheet of opaque black pasteboard be taken, and having drawn on it, and then cut out, a number of areas of similar size, and possessing the forms of triangles, parallelograms, and any other angular figures which may be considered rivals in point of beauty, let it be held up against the sky, so that nothing but the areas cut in it may attract attention; and let these be compared in point of beauty.* This done, it will be found that the eye very soon begins to decline all the triangles and parallelograms, and to hesitate as to greatest beauty only between the square, certain rectangles, and the lozenge. With regard to the relative merits of these three, the eye may not find it easy to determine. The rectangles alluded to are those having their adjacent sides in the same ratio to each other as the side and the diagonal of a square, and the sides of the beautiful triangle of Plato. Their relations to the square are, therefore, very intimate, and they can only be viewed as members in a series of which the square is the basis.

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* From this comparison I exclude all polygons, because it is impossible to view them as they are in themselves, or otherwise than in relation to the circle,—so great is the demand of the eye for continuity, wherever it sees a line or system of united lines.

With regard to the square, that it is its greater symmetry, physical stability, or geometrical importance, or some other intellectual feature, and not its mere angular character, that makes it seem a rival to the lozenge in beauty, appears, I think, satisfactory from the following experiment. Let a square be viewed first in that position in which one naturally views a square, that is, with a side horizontal; then let it be turned so as to be brought into that position in which one naturally looks at a lozenge, that is, with a diagonal horizontal; and comparing the impression made upon the eye by the first position with that made by the second, is not the eye more interested by the latter, the diagonal position, than by the former, the parallel one, and does it not even tend to fancy that a rectangular figure so placed is oblique angled, that a square is somewhat of a lozenge? And, indeed, of this optical delusion in favour of beauty, the ancient Italians seem to have availed themselves extensively, since they have always placed with a diagonal vertical the small square bricks with which their now ruined walls are everywhere faced; whence these small bricks appear somewhat diamond-shaped, and there results all over the surface a reticular and lattice-work, which is certainly far more beautiful than any other aspect that could be imparted to these walls, without the use of lozenge-shaped bricks, of which the unfitness no doubt forbade the manufacture. Something of the same kind may also be observed in some of our own buildings, as, for instance, in the disposition of the bricks in some parts of Hampton Court Palace.

But the experiment which has just been proposed for determining the comparative beauty of simple angles and areas with the pasteboard, may be viewed as already made to hand on a great scale in the form of certain Windows, in the construction of which taste has had as great a share as reason. Thus in Ecclesiastical Edifices, Picturesque Cottages, and the like, where beauty of aspect is regarded as a consideration of primary importance, it is to be observed, that, though fitness would prescribe for the casements square and rectangular forms universally, yet the demands of fitness are very generally set aside, and lozenge-panes and lattice-work very generally introduced. The same state of things may also be observed to a great extent in Gothic architecture generally. And this proves that the lozenge forms are far more pleasing to the eye; for it needs intense beauty to appear pleasing, when it exists in violation of fitness.

Another sort of experiment may also be proposed, with a view to discover what are the most beautiful elementary areas, and one which appeals wholly to nature. I allude to the compositions created by gentle breezes playing on the surface of water. Let any one take a station in some point where he can command a view of some little creek, bay, or harbour, when light breezes are blowing, and observe the various aspects of the ripple in reference to its beauty. He will find that there is great variety in the forms of the wavelets; and perhaps he may have been gazing some time without much satisfaction, and even with a sensible straining of the eye, when, after many a change, the moving surface of the water will gradually take on a form of ripple which quite relieves and delights the eye, while it runs its beautiful course under the breeze. Now, on marking the character of such beautiful ripple, it will be found that it consists of undulæ which, more nearly than in the other cases, are lozenge-shaped, and that it gains the greatest degree of beauty when it forms the most perfect system of reticulation. But this, surely, is a most decisive evidence of the beauty of the lozenge; for the reticulation which appears so beautiful, is merely a system of similar lozenges placed side by side. Moreover, in order to this experiment, it is not indispensable to wait for such breezes as have been described. There are certain creeks and harbours where, in consequence of the reflection of the waves from opposite rocks or pieces of masonry, the effect described is constantly displayed. It may also be produced, though in a less satisfactory way, by throwing into calm water simultaneously two stones, at such a distance from each other that the systems of circular waves which they generate may interfere. This done it will be found that those parts of the resulting systems of interfering circles which are the most beautiful, are those where the undulæ are the most perfectly reticulated, and where each, viewed by itself, is most nearly possessed of a lozenge form.

The comparative beauty of various angles and elementary areas may also be farther tested by an appeal to the art of engraving. An engraver is under no necessity to make his graver lines cross at one angle more than another. It might, perhaps, be more easy for him to cross them at right angles. Still, however, the comparative facility would not be such as to call for a sacrifice of beauty, if other angles were more favourable to its creation. Now, if a great number of engravings by different hands be inspected, they will be found to exhibit great differences as to clearness, truth, and beauty. Some will be found to display all the lights and shadows, nearness and distance, transparency or opacity of natural objects, while others will be found to be dim and dirty all over. Now, if the forms of the interlineations are inspected where the most beautiful, clear, and transparent effects are produced, it will be found that the lines there cross at rhomboidal angles, thus giving rise to lozenge and half-lozenge areas, and a reticulated surface. In other passages again, which, when properly introduced, form a happy contrast with the former, in being still clear, but hard, opaque, and obtrusive, it will be found that the graver lines cross at right angles, so as to give rise to square and rectangular interlineations. And thus the artist, by the appropriate use of the lozenge and the square, can, without impairing the cleanness of his work, impart what degree of clearness and transparency, or of opacity and prominency he pleases, to the objects which he has to represent; and without the aid of colour, can delineate all the variety which the true forms and surfaces of natural objects display. But if he depart from the use of these figures, and do not draw his accessory upfilling lines symmetrically in relation to them, his work will soon become dirty and insignificant, as is indeed the case with too many.

All the various expedients, then, which we have had recourse to, in order to discover the element of beauty in angular compositions, lead us to the lozenge and the square as the most beautiful elementary areas. And of these two it may perhaps be said with truth, that the lozenge is the favourite of the eye, and the square the favourite of the understanding. It may be remarked, however, that, from this state of things, it is to be expected that all the intermediate rhomboids, as combining more or less of the beauty of both the square and the lozenge, shall appear to be more or less beautiful. And that this is actually the case will not be denied. Nay, it is to be expected that even those rhomboids, which are more acute than the lozenge, shall not be destitute of beauty, since they are all members of the same family of which the lozenge is the ideal or type. It is also to be expected that rectangles shall be more or less beautiful, since all their angles are right angles, and since thus they have a very intimate relationship to the square.

The beauty of compositions, in which the lozenge angles prevail, may, however, be well seen by observing the skin. What other sort of marking could be devised for it so beautiful as that fine reticulation which is traced upon it by nature? Nay, reticulation imparts a beauty even when it is itself invisible. It will be found, on examination, that the degree of purity and transparency which the aspect of the skin displays in any case, is owing not so much to any real transparency as to the perfection of the reticulation of the epidermis. Moreover, while it relieves youth of the aspect of grossness which would otherwise attach to the fulness of the form at that period of life, reticulation also relieves age of the aspect of decay, which wrinkles are calculated to express. When the wrinkles of age are so interlaced as to form a system of reticulation, they impart more beauty than they take away. In those torsos, also, which are most remarkable for their beauty, such as the Torso Belvidere, the Laocoon, the Hercules Farnese, and the Colossus of the Monte Cavallo, it is easily seen that their peculiar beauty depends in a great measure upon this, that the forms of the muscles are everywhere modelled as much into lozenge shapes, and forms similar to Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, Plate II., as the proprieties of anatomy will admit of, so that, not the region of the ribs only, but the whole torso, is covered by a beautiful system of cluster-like undulations.

The beauty of the lozenge might also be demonstrated by a general survey of nature. From such a survey it would appear, that, wherever the eye rested on beautiful objects, lozenge forms were abundant. What so beautiful, for instance, as birds? Now the bodies of birds (allowing for the necessary undulations of contour) are more or less lozenge-shaped on whatever aspect they are viewed, and they are beautiful much in proportion as they are more nearly of this form. Butterflies, also, these most beautiful creatures, are, when their wings are folded, triangular, that is, half lozenge shaped; and, when their wings are extended, trapezoidal, and that in such a manner that they still exhibit the lozenge angles, though in a new order. In reference to both classes of animals, however, and, indeed, in reference to organized beings generally, the contour is so completely defined by curved lines, that the eye cannot easily rest upon the area or frame which they occupy, or recognise the lozenge, even when it exists. It is, therefore, better to avoid dwelling on this subject, in order that we may the sooner arrive at the consideration of the beauty of contours.

Let us still, however, take one glance at the vegetable kingdom. Here also, indeed, as in the animal kingdom, the angles are generally rounded off, as the laws of organisation demand; still, however, lozenge forms are of far more frequent occurrence here, and their presence and beauty are more easily observed. The leaves, petals, and even the profiles of entire trees, shrubs, and flowers, when most beautiful, will generally be found to be most nearly coincident with Fig. 2, Plate II., or the lozenge in form. Like the human skin, also, that of the trunks, branches, and leaves of trees, and vegetables generally, owes its beautiful aspect of transparency and clearness, whatever its colour, chiefly to the beautiful system of reticulation which nature everywhere traces on it.

Passing from the vegetable to the mineral kingdom, we come into a province where all the beauty that exists is angular or kaleidoscopic. And though that beauty often depends rather upon symmetry generally than upon the presence of the very kaleidoscopic angles and the corresponding facets, yet, no doubt, these angles and facets are developed as often as the forms of the crystallizing molecules do not demand others; and, certainly, wherever they do occur, the beauty of the resulting crystals is the greatest possible. Nor is it very seldom that they occur. Most tessular forms, and many others besides, display on every aspect those very areas whose beauty I am endeavouring to establish. In fact, wherever systems of equilateral triangles are united, as in the case of the tetrahædron, octohædron, decahædron, (or five-sided bipyramid), icosahædron, &c., the eye sees, on all hands, lozenges in various projections; while in the rhombic dodecahædron the lozenge is developed with geometrical accuracy round the whole figure.

It would not be suitable, however, to enter minutely on such details here. I therefore pass over the consideration of the crystalline forms affected by particular substances, and can only not refrain from remarking, that the great cosmical element, Water, which plays such an important part in the economy of nature, uniformly exhibits, when it passes to the solid state, the lozenge angles; and, indeed, when the resulting crystals possess unity of structure, assumes the most exquisitely kaleidoscopic forms conceivable. No finer examples of this order of beauty can be found than the forms of snow flakes, when generated in still air at a suitable temperature, as has been explained to us by the voyagers to the Arctic Regions. Closely connected with snow-flakes, and, as I believe, depending on the same causes, are the beautiful kaleidoscopic forms of the blossoms of Monocotyledonous plants, in which the elements of beauty we are now considering are constantly recurring. Here, also, I might enlarge on the beauty of honeycomb and of lace-work, which are hexagonal structures, and consequently systems each chamber of which is composed of three lozenges.

But passing now from animals, plants, and crystals, where Nature imparts individuality to her objects, to view her in the mass, let us ask, whether we find here also the recurrence of lozenge forms in her beautiful regions? And to this it is to be answered, that the canopy of the sky, the surface of the earth, the sands of the sea-shore, and the surface of the ocean and of rivers and lakes, very often display a beautiful system of reticulation. As to the atmosphere, such is the character of certain cirri and cirro-cumuli, the clouds which seem the highest in the air, and which, as they are the most highly reticulated, so are they the most beautiful of all clouds. As to the sea-shore, such is the character of the sands on which the rippling tide when ebbing away has impressed the forms of its own beauty; and as to the tide itself, recourse may, as I have already shewn, be had to it, in order to prove the superior beauty of reticulation to every other form of monotonous composition.

But let us proceed to make a few remarks as to the occurrence of the kaleidoscopic elements in architecture. Here, however, it will be immediately perceived, that we are not to expect an abundant display of the rhomboidal series of areas; because the weight of the materials demands, that a rectangular series of forms shall be observed in the distribution of all the heavy masses. The principles of household accommodation also, conspire with the law of gravitation towards the same effect; for with equal peripheries, rectangular spaces have much larger areas than rhomboidal. From the plan, therefore, as well as from the elevation of architectural structures, there seems good reason for expecting that the rhomboidal elements of beauty will be wholly excluded. Moreover, all ornamental details must observe a harmony of form with the leading masses and areas of which they are the ornaments. It might, therefore, be reasonably expected, that rhomboidalism would be wholly excluded both from the masses and the minutiæ of architecture. But let us see whether, in point of fact, it really be so.

And to what epoch of architecture are we to look, in the hope of finding the rhomboidal elements of beauty, if they exist any where? From what has been said, it appears that these elements can only be made use of to gratify the eye, and not without disregarding the suggestions of reason, founding her claims both on the urgency of the law of gravitation and those of household economy. We are, therefore, plainly not to look for lozenge forms and angles in any highly intellectual epoch, but rather in some epoch when the feeling of the beautiful rather than of fitness, and romance rather than reason, was the spirit of the times. We need not, therefore, look to the ancient Greeks, for they were a singularly intellectual people; and, in point of fact, not a trace of rhomboidal forms can be discovered in the Grecian architecture. Neither need we look to the architecture of the Romans. But were not the middle ages the very epoch when fitness yielded to beauty, and reason to romance? There, therefore, if any where, we may expect to find rhomboidal forms replacing rectangular in architecture.

Now, so completely does this anticipation accord with fact, that a simple inspection of any specimen of Gothic architecture is sufficient to shew that immense sacrifices of fitness are made on all hands, just on purpose to develope rhomboidal angles and forms; and it will be found that, just in proportion as this order of architecture culminates to its degree of greatest beauty (as, for instance, in the Chapel of Henry VII., Westminster, and the Chapel, King's College, Cambridge), the lozenge and lozenge angles are more accurately introduced. The arches in this order of architecture, instead of being portions of continuous curves, as they are in the Roman, Byzantine, and Modern Architecture, and as they plainly ought to be wherever they are constructed in harmony with fitness; or instead of being the ordinate of a curve merely, as in the Greek Architecture, where a regard to the unity and harmony of the whole appears to have forbidden the use of all curves whatever, Gothic arches are pointed or angular, so as to develope the forms of the rhomboidal elements of beauty; and it is most interesting to observe, that, in keeping with the fact that the angles of the lozenge itself are two, one acute, the other obtuse, so also Gothic arches are two, the one acute, the other obtuse. Nay, it will always be found, that the effect of a Gothic arch upon the eye is pleasing, much in proportion as its angle is more or less nearly coincident with one or other of the angles of the lozenge. Of *the equilateral arch*, Pugin says, that "this may be regarded as the standard form of the pointed arch, and is perhaps the most beautiful."* Now this arch, as measured by its chords, expands at an angle of 60°, that is, the acute angle of the lozenge. In the obtuse or Tudor arch, also, particularly during the period before it came to be indiscriminately used, it will be found that its angle is double that of the former, and consequently equal to the obtuse angle of the lozenge. Here, however, the same remark may be made which has been repeatedly made already, that the right angle and its half are often able to dispute the field with the angles of the lozenge.

But it is not in the arches only that the rhomboidal elements appear in Gothic architecture. The tracery displays them in still greater perfection. The great windows also are often of a polygonal structure, of which the hexagon with its radii may be taken as the basis. Here again, however, we often find the octagon with its radii contending in beauty with the hexagon, that is, the rectangular Rosace rivalling the rhomboidal, as in the kaleidoscope itself. The Mullions also almost invariably divide the windows into spaces as nearly quadrangular as a just regard to their curvature will admit; and the lattices which fill the casements are always composed of lozenges, and constitute a system of reticulation. In such a situation, indeed, the eye could not bear square areas, whose beauty is, as has been already stated, rather addressed to the understanding than to the sense. In a word, in Gothic architecture these four elements are always to be met with; first, rectangularism, to satisfy the laws of gravitation and of maximum area, and so to please the demand of *the understanding* for the beautiful; secondly, rhomboidalism, to impart kaleidoscopic beauty, and please the demand of *the eye* for the beautiful; thirdly, curvature in the lines, to impart feeling (as will be explained when the beauty of contour is considered); and, fourthly, departures from symmetry, to impart picturesqueness and scenery to the structure.

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* See Pugin's *Specimens of Gothic Architecture*, vol. i. p. 3.

But though the Gothic order affords perhaps the most ample display of the rhomboidal elements of beauty, yet it is not there only that they are met with. They are appreciated by the eye to such an extent, that in other styles of architecture also they are introduced as often as their application is not obviously inharmonious and unfit. In Domes and Cupolas, for instance, which do not demand so imperiously as rectangular roofs that the ornaments shall be rectangular also, we often find a rhomboidal system of ornaments; as, for instance, in the ceiling of the Temple of Roma and Venus, and that of the Church of San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome. In Naples also, not only may the inside of cupolas be seen ornamented in a similar way, but some cupolas are even painted outside with lozenge forms in staring colours; something similar to which is also frequently to be seen in Gothic roofs, as, for instance, in the Chapel in Westminster, formerly referred to. But in order to see the most judicious application of rhomboidalism in architecture, classical Mosaic pavements must be inspected, as, for instance, those of Pompei, which are in almost every case in a state of high preservation.

CHAPTER V.

ON LINES AND CONTOURS AS ELEMENTS OF BEAUTY AND EXPRESSION.

WHEN we look to nature with a view to discover, if we can, her mode of working on the largest scale and in the most general terms, we arrive at the conclusion that it is by the establishment and use of currents, meaning by currents nothing more definite than a linear movement of force, or such constitution of force as causes a linear movement of matter. It has indeed been ascertained in modern science that no two dissimilar bodies though at the same temperature, any more than two similar bodies if at different temperatures, can be brought into contact, but currents tend to form between them, leading to the inference that the only condition in the material universe on which currents of every kind would cease, would be an absolute homogeneity of matter and identity of temperature everywhere, nay, more than this, the aggregation of the whole universe into one mass; for according to our very general conception of currents, such forces as gravitation, magnetism, light, &c., must be included; for, whether there be linear movement in them, and force different from matter or not, it is certain that in virtue of them, there are linear movements of matter.

We may therefore expect the face of nature to bear everywhere the traces of currents, and to be marked everywhere by lines; and it is easy to shew that if it be so, then these lines will not pass unobserved by the spectator. Thus it has been fully ascertained that the human mind, when anyhow called upon, as, for instance, by the use of the senses, to contemplate anything that exists, requires, as the very conditions on which alone it can admit such existence to be possible, a time during which the object may exist, as well as a space in which it may exist. Deny that an object exists in time, you deny that it exists altogether. Now this idea of time or duration thus indispensable to our belief in being, and inseparable from it, is known to the mind only as that which is a recipient of successions more shortly as succession itself. Whatever, therefore, presents itself to the senses as consisting of successive parts, gives to the mind the assurance of time, satisfies the first condition of being, and proves itself kindred to thought itself, and therefore also kindred to feeling, nay, to life; for thought, and feeling, and life itself, are known emphatically in successive moments. But such is the characteristic of a line in its relation to the senses. It can only be viewed as a succession. When I look at the azure of the sky, my eye rests on it. I see it all at once; and so in every case when I gaze on any colour which is not bounded off by others, and when no lines appear between them. They awake in me the idea of space, not of time. But when I look upon the line which defines the mountain against the sky, or on the whole horizon line, however level and monotonous and uniform it may be, that of the plain, or the ocean, my eye always sweeps along it. I cannot regard it as simultaneously present to me. It immediately presents itself as consisting in successive parts. It awakes the idea of succession; and since it is in the outward, and its idea refers to matter, it awakes not that of succession only, but of matter manifesting succession, that is, the idea of motion, and therefore of a moving cause, and therefore of force, and therefore ultimately of thought, feeling, and volition, which is the type and the origin of all force. But an outward object which uniformly, spontaneously, and according to law awakes certain ideas, is usually and naturally said to be symbolic and expressive of these ideas. Lines, therefore, in virtue of psychological conditions, which we need not here inquire farther into, are symbolic or expressive of thought, feeling, or volition, or more generally of mental powers and qualities. They must therefore be the principal elements of that order of beauty which we have named Expressive Beauty—that to which chiefly the picturesque and the sublime attach.

The lines which are traced upon the face of nature, therefore, are worthy in the very first place of our scientific regard. What are they then? Let us inquire. Nor need we enter on the inquiry under the apprehension that they are so multifarious that we cannot hope to overtake them. Nature is indeed all but infinitely varied in her expression, and so, doubtless, are the lines on which that expression depends in the variations of their forms, in the constants, so to speak, of their equations. But their genera, their natures, are neither very numerous nor very various. The analyst, in fact, whether it be astronomy, or physical optics, or terrestrial mechanics, or haply molecular science he is dealing with, always finds his constructions leading to the same or analogous lines. Of these, therefore, let us notice a few of the simplest and most eminent. They ought, according to our precognition of nature, to prove to us the simplest and most eminent lineaments of expressive beauty. Let us first lay them down, and then see whether they are or are not.

Betaking ourselves first, then, to the celestial fields, where the lines of nature are presented to us in much their simplest aspects, and referring to the works of astronomers for an account of the lines which define the heavenly bodies, and their courses, do we not read in every page, of ellipses and hyperbolas, parabolas, and circles, tangents and axes—in a word, that group of remarkable lines which are presented by the cone and its sections? For the sake of mathematical convenience, indeed, they are not usually derived from the cone; but this is the original conception of their genesis; and that it is the natural and the true conception, follows from this, that the cone being the form of a pencil of light, "the first-born of heaven," and the element of every radiant influence, is, as it were, the very *first form* of nature, while at the same time, when its base is dilated, and made to return upon itself, so as to be complete all round, the cone becomes the sphere, which is, as will appear more fully hereafter, the *last form*, the end and aim of nature with regard to form.

To arrive at a popular conception of the conic sections as developed by a pencil of light, suppose a magic lanthorn, with its screen before it, and the pencil of light spreading as it proceeds out into space. Then, when the screen is erect, or at right angles to the course of the pencil, whatever the distance of the screen from the radiant point, the light displays on it a circle. When the screen is made to decline, or fall away from the lanthorn, the circular disk becomes elliptical, and an infinite variety of ellipses may be obtained, becoming longer and narrower as the falling away of the screen is increased; and if the screen stretched out into space as far as the pencil of light, it would be found that they were all complete and true ellipses. But when the screen has fallen away so far as to become parallel to the upper slope edge of the pencil from which it is falling away, the cone can no longer return into itself. There is now a parabola, or rather the parabola of that cone; for it is obvious that, like all the circles, all the parabolas of the same cone must be similar to each other. Let the screen fall over still farther, and now we obtain hyperbolas which, like the ellipses, may be infinite in variety.

Considering, then, that the circle and the parabola are singular, while the ellipse and hyperbola are infinitely varied, it is plainly the latter couple which we are to expect to see most abundant in nature, and to possess the greatest æsthetic importance. To these, however, we must not fail to add the straight line, which is both the form of the elementary, or single ray of light, and of the conic section, when the screen has fallen over so far as to have become merely tangent to the pencil. The series, therefore, consists of

The circle, Fig. 1.
Ellipses, Fig. 2.
The parabola, Fig. 3. } Plate V.
Hyperbolas, Fig. 4.
The straight line.

And what shall we say as to the intensity or amount of expressiveness which we are to expect in these lines respectively, and, therefore, as to the energy of the power which they will express or represent? To this it is to be answered, that the circle, and the whole series of ellipses, as they return into themselves, are obviously finite, while the parabola, all the hyperbolas, and especially the straight line, stretch out into the infinite. The latter, therefore, when contemplated in the spontaneity of intelligence, and followed out in the mind's eye, will tend to awake the idea of the infinite along with that of the power which they express. To straight and hyperbolic lines, therefore, when presented in nature or art, an expression of greater power will attach than to circular and elliptic lines. They will appear to transcend the finite in the sphere they belong to; as, for instance, they will appear to transcend humanity in the sphere of human nature, and consequently to invest the expression of the individual in which they predominate with great grandeur, with that which remains of vast mental power, where the finite element of humanity, its kindliness, is wanting, and, therefore, with the aspect of commanding intelligence, along with defective kindliness; that is, they will express the merely just. And hence, a rule for the artist, when his object is to represent a prophet, a judge, or a senator. The straight line ought to be made to predominate in the whole composition, and where straight lines are to be applied to each other, they ought to be united by a hyperbolic curve. The head must be high and square, as also the shoulders, the eyebrows and mouth must be straight, and the neck and entire form columnar, draped in a robe which hangs down in simple folds. These principles will be seen to be embodied in the Apostle of Thorwaldsen, Plate VI., and in the Head of Jupiter, Plate, VII., Figure 1. But we cannot enlarge on them here; nor so long as we remain ignorant of the typical form of the human figure; for the type of a specific form can never be departed from even in favour of the finest general forms, without producing monstrosity, and consequently without displeasing in the highest degree.

If from astronomical works we turn to those which treat of the kindred department of optics, we find ourselves again brought into converse, and that more frankly, with the cone, though under the name of pencil. Its sections, especially those which we have shewn to be the most important in the science of beauty, viz., the ellipse and the hyperbola, are constantly presenting themselves. Here, also, we obtain certain curves of a higher order, as, for instance, caustics, that is curves of the series of the cycloid, Figure 5, Plate V., and epicycloid, Figure 6, which is epicycloidal—the line rolled over being now a circle; Figure 7, which is the companion to the cycloid, &c.

From optics, we also obtain the lemniscoid, the helix, or screw, both circular and elliptical, and others related to the doctrine of elasticity.

To these, pneumatics and hydrodynamics make certain very valuable additions, as, for instance, in reference to rectilinear pressures, the logarithmic curve, Figure 9; and in eddies, certain spirals, of which we may specially mention the equable and the logarithmic spirals, Figures 10 and 11, and so on.

Now, that our inquiry, whether these be not the outlines or lineaments on which the expressive beauty of objects depends, is at least not vain or inapplicable, is at all events shewn by this, that while the works of men of science are wholly conversant about such lines, so are they abundant on the face of nature. In nature, they do not, indeed, possess the simplicity of the geometrical conception, for they are always the products of a greater number of forces than the present state of geometry can co-ordinate and take into account. Yet they exist everywhere in such perfection, that they are the same to sense as if they were geometrically perfect. Each of the proper curves, which in geometry, indeed, is only a species, may in æsthetics be regarded as a genus. The analytic power of the eye is vastly inferior to that of the calculus. There are many curves which, geometrically considered, possess different, and even incompatible properties, between which the eye cannot detect any difference. Thus, to the eye, the catenary (or curve of a hanging chain) seems a parabola. So thought even Galileo. And artists are generally content with certain symmetrically combined arches of circles by way of an ellipse. We need not enter upon these curves, therefore, with scientific detail.

Let us not fail to add, however, that whilst pure geometry finds itself most at home among curves which are continuous and similar to themselves in one direction only, as, for instance, all along convex or concave on that aspect on which they once are so, there exist in nature two laws (or possibly a twofold manifestation of a deeper law which is one in its ground), in virtue of which every line after having started or formed itself in one direction, must sooner or later thereafter tend to form itself similarly in the contrary direction, though not of the same dimensions. To produce such a result, the laws of reaction and of polarity conspire. Besides the usual curves of geometry, therefore, we are to expect in nature abundance of waving lines or curves of contrary flexure, like the companion to the cycloid, Figure 7. Of these we may take as the type, that line which is the first to make its appearance in the human embryo, which holds its pre-eminence during the whole life, and forms as it were the keel of our vessel, the axis of our entire organization, I mean the line of the vertebral column, that which is expressed in the carriage of the person. It is quite wonderful how often this line is reproduced in every composition remarkable for its grace (see Fig. 5, Plate II.), as also all over the organization, especially in the countenance and the brain, and in that which may be regarded as the grand organ to which the brain is the pendant, viz., the muscular system. It has already been signalized by Hogarth as the Line of Beauty, and its value is universally felt and acknowledged. Hogarth's name for it is, however, too general, for there are many other lines of beauty, while with respect to this, it is one kind of beauty which it expresses, viz., humanity, sweetness, amiableness. It might, therefore, be better called *the Line of Grace.*

As it becomes straightened, the expression, according to what has been already advanced, must rise from the merely humane to the saintly and the angelic, from the graceful to the grand. Its value in expressing the graceful, the saintly, the angelic, is intended to be shown in Figure 2, Plate VII., which is an archangel after Raphael, whose eyes, lips, every feature, is modelled upon it.

But what will happen when, instead of becoming straight as by a force in relation with the infinite, and thus becoming expressive of that relationship, and consequently of transcendent intelligence, and therefore in the moral sphere, of pure justice or severity, the waving line becomes more highly curved than the type, and each curve circular? It must then have quite an opposite expression, that is, of intelligence most finite, a disregard of justice. If, however, it be fully developed in both its parts, it will not fail to be expressive of power, for it is a manifestation of powerful action and reaction. Its expressiveness will therefore be intense. It must, however, be most sinister. If, then, when it tended towards the right line, we designated the expression proper to it by the term angelic, here, where it tends towards the tortuous, we may name it satanic. Its expression, when of this form, is shewn in Figure 3, Plate VII., which is a head of the same form as Figure 2, but so modified that all the lines of grace have been bent more into contrary flexures so as to be tortuous.

And what will be the effect when the contrary flexure is wanting, and the line becomes simply circular? In this case we have the line which is of all the most finite. We have also evidence of the absence of the power of reaction. If then the object in which these lines, now transformed into the merely circular, shew themselves, be naturally or typically expressive of animation and intelligence, as, for instance, the human countenance, the prevalence of the circle in the features must obliterate that expression, leaving only that of madness or stupidity. This effect is shewn in Figure 4, Plate VII. If, however, the object in which the circular lines appear have not animation and intelligence as its proper attributes, but stability or force in mere potentiality, then of those attributes its circular lineaments will be eminently expressive. Hence the value of circular lines in a Hercules when reposing, in a Samson Agonistes, or in a madman in chains.

Such are, I think, the most general principles on which expression depends. But in order to explain the actual phenomena of expression on the surface of our globe, whether in art or in nature, these principles must not be viewed in the abstract and isolated manner in which they have been now presented. They must be viewed in relation to the forces under which the object exists in whom they are seen, especially the force of gravitation, or the weight of the materials of which the object is composed. This force may, in fact, be viewed as acting in antagonism to individual life, and individual life in antagonism to it. And hence, since life freely flowing and joy are one and the same thing, drooping or falling lines, as in Niobe's features, Plate VIII., doing homage to the power of gravitation, come to express the defeat, suspension, or arrest of life, that is, sadness. Upturned lines and features on the other hand, as in the laughing head in the same Plate, are expressive of joy; and when they are upturned so far as to seem to set gravitation at defiance, then (under a law to be afterwards explained) they are ludicrous.

But there is in our mental frame normally a most beautiful connection between joy and kindness on the one hand, and the absence of joy and the absence of kindness on the other. And hence, a further complication of the phenomena of expression, by which the simply intelligent, holy, senatorial, or judicial, by the drawing down of the brows and angles of the mouth, is transformed into the merciless, and the simply stupid by the hanging of the chops and double chin, into the brutish.

Nor is it in the human form alone that these lines display themselves. In ornamentation and in the fine arts, nay, in the most simple economic arts, all their various forms admit of being introduced, as for instance, into the moulding of pottery, a domestic art coeval with that of architecture itself. And it forms a fine verification of the views of this work to observe how a people, in proportion as they rise in intelligence and fine feeling, and become possessed of an eye for the Beautiful, surround themselves with vessels and vases, still more and more beautiful, clothing with the charms of the spiritual, objects which in their primary use are designed to minister to the most merely material wants of our nature. Beautifully have modern paleontologists, from the discovery of a single bone in a fossil cave, determined the entire animal; and similarly it would, I believe, be possible to determine the civilization of a people from the study of their pottery.

But here let us close this part of our subject, that we may bestow at least a few words on fields of no less interest which lie still beyond us.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COURSE OF NATURE IN DEVELOPING THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE EXPRESSIVE.

In the preceding pages, we have committed ourselves to principles to which, if only they be sound, too much importance can scarcely be attached; for in the same breath that they give the first elements of beauty, they give also the first elements of morphology, or the science of forms, which may justly be regarded as the science of sciences.

It is implied in the conclusions which we have already arrived at, that the direct course of nature in individual objects, and in individualising objects, is towards the production of forms of the greatest symmetry. Thus her course is everywhere towards the establishment of a balance and equilibrium of the forces which animate and constitute objects; and this equilibrium can be established only when the constituent parts and particles are balanced in their relative positions, that is, when the whole is symmetrical.

To this it may at first sight seem an objection, that it implies a tendency in nature to a state of rest, a cessation from working; whereas, in point of fact, as given by observation, nature's true course is a system of ceaseless working, of unweaving as well as of weaving; and her delight after having constructed a form, to dissolve it again; and after having bathed or dyed its constituent matter afresh in the nearest fountain of fire, air, earth, or water, to proceed to work it up anew into some new form. And this is indeed true; but it is no objection. It is a necessary consequence of the accidents to which the completed products of nature are subject, in virtue of the world's position in space, and its orbit as a planet. Hence an inevitable periodicity, and a system of weaving and unweaving of all things; for hence no two positions on the surface, or in the orbit of our planet are identically the same as to the forces which operate then and there; and hence any delicately constructed product of nature, anything of this kind that the course of nature has done, needs only to be changed as to its position, either in space or in the season of the year, in order to be undone. Along with its change of position, the forces under which it was constructed are changed also. The form and structure which it brings with it into its new position are no longer in equilibrio with the forces which rule there ; and hence one or other of two alternatives, which it is important to remark. Either it must fall to pieces, or, it must be reconstructed in equilibrio, with the new forces which bear upon it. And hence plainly an opening for the classification of the products of nature into two grand classes, *first,* those which, after having been constructed, tend only to go to pieces, or dissolve away entirely ; and, *secondly*, those which, in their completed forms, retain the means, on a suitable change of position, of accomplishing their own reproduction ; and such, in proper language, are *the dead* and *the living,* and such is the real difference between them. In science, they are commonly designated the inorganic and the organic. But these terms throw no light upon the subject, and, indeed, lead rather to misconception ; so that instead of organic, it had been better to say organised, a term which is expressive enough of those forms which are emphatically called living, and which is exclusive of others.

But in this conception of the course of nature, the construction of the forms of greatest symmetry, and their resolution into elements of form again, do we not obtain a key to unfold to us those very forms which must be the first and the last words of the science of form, the very warp and the woof of the web of nature, and therefore the limits of all forms that are beautiful? If our conception gives any definite forms, we certainly do. Now, this it does; for that form which is to possess the property of greatest symmetry can be no more than one form. Symmetry being equality in the relation of many points to one point, and to one another, is a purely geometrical conception, and it must have its maximum in some one definite form, and not in several, or in many. What, then, let us ask, is that form which possesses the property of maximum symmetry? We need not wait long for an answer. Plainly it is the sphere (spherical superficies); for in the sphere more than in any other form the number of points is great which are similarly related to the same point, and to one another. And what is that form which is expressive of the most complete dissolution, while yet the object so dissolved is kept in the course of nature? Plainly it is the straight line, representative of an atom or point actuated by a simple force, and therefore in one direction.

To *the sphere*, therefore, and *the straight line* in symmetrical relation with it, that is, to the sphere and its axis we are led, as the winning and the starting posts in the course of nature, as the final and the initial forms of nature, the co-ordinates, as it were, to which all her actual forms are to be referred. Say that any individualized object has attained all the maturity of form of which it is capable, it will have attained all the sphericity which existing circumstances will permit. Say that it is only commencing its life, it will be axial or elongated. And the life of nature, under a morphological point of view, where the species possesses a proper life of its own, and is never entirely dissolved, will consist in the alternate production of the sphere, and the shooting of an axis out of it, (the latter destined to surround itself with matter, and to terminate in the return to the spherical again); while in those objects, which do not possess a proper life, development must terminate in the attainment of the spherical, so far as their conditions of existence allow. A change of place in their case can only tend to their dissolution, not to their redevelopment and reconstruction. And as in the case of life, the development of the axis or embryo and the period of growth may be represented as the shooting of one axis out of the sphere, so in this case, the case of death, dissolution may be regarded as the shooting out of the sphere into axes or radii on all hands; thus making room for a class of productions which shall connect the living with the dead, and in their forms both possess an axis, and display radiation. And such is the well-known position and character of plants, radiated animals, &c.

But not to proceed any further by the method of deduction, nor to speculate longer on the first lines of morphology, let us now for a little turn our eyes upon nature, and see whether she countenances our inferences. And having looked abroad upon her all our lives, what shall we say? In a word, do not the whole heavens, does not the whole earth bear witness to the fact, that nature, when she is tending towards the statical and stable, and to the very degree that she attains in any object to a state of internal repose, attains to the spherical or spheroidal form for that object? Look at all the stars, and at this solid world of ours, whose stability is surely vast compared with all things on its surface. Are they not all spheres? And if any of them have failed to reach or retain this form, is it not plainly because their want of repose insists upon a shortcoming or a departure from the spherical?

Look to the mineral kingdom, to the forms of crystals. Here, indeed, the generating forces have been, and still are, acting only in a few directions (along certain axes), so that the attainment of the sphere is impossible. Still, in every crystal considered as complete, nature has succeeded so far at least in her nisus towards the form of internal stability, as to have established an axis and an equator; for every crystal has an axis and an equator. In many she has done much more. The crystals of the most perfect and most simple mineral species, the diamond, and the noble metals, for instance, are such that a sphere may be circumscribed about each of them. And why in them, and in all other minerals, those continual truncations and bevelments of the projecting edges and angles? And why the actual forms of crystals always more nearly round than their cleavage or primary forms? Why but that nature, according to the best of her ability, is aiming in them all at the development of the sphere; and hence the scientific fitness and beauty of that step which has been lately made in crystallography,* namely, the referring the planes of the facets of the polyhædron which nature gives in her crystals to the periphery of the circumscribing sphere.

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* See Phillips' Mineralogy. By Brooke and Millar: Longman, London, 1852.

Nor is it in the field of the astronomer and the mineralogist only that we find evidence of nature's love of the spherical as the form towards which her productions culminate. We find it in the domain of the botanist, and the zoologist as well. Look to the vegetable kingdom. Here indeed there is life in the individual. There is a call, therefore, upon nature to retrace her steps, so that the individual, instead of remaining for ever wrapped up in the form of greatest security, that form which gives a maximum of contents with a minimum of exposure, the sphere, shall stretch and unfold itself. Life, as has been shewn, aims first at the production of axial, radiant, or linear forms. In the organized world, therefore, it is not when life is flowing, it is, on the contrary, when life has done its work and returned to repose, it is very late in organised beings, if at all, that we are to look for the spherical as a characteristic. Moreover, in some cases, as, for instance, in the case of the entire plant or tree, the obstacles to the development of the sphere are insuperable. One part of the individual is destined to exist underground, and the other in the air, media which are very different as to penetrability, and hence necessarily a mighty difference as to the facility with which the two hemispheres can be developed. Still however, for the fact that nature is aiming at the spherical in the vegetable kingdom, good evidence is not wanting. Thus it has been found as a general law, that the underground radii or the root ever strives to be of co-ordinate extent with the aerial radii or top. And with regard to the latter, when ample space and air are allowed to it, and the disturbing influence of winds, &c., is withdrawn to the utmost, it will be found, as a general rule, that in the very proportion that it possesses stability and repose, a tree or clump of trees tends to attain to a hemispherical, or (by the aid of gravitation) a spherical form. Compare the oak, the chestnut, &c., of a thousand years, and slow-growing, long-lived trees and evergreens, with the poplar or the palm of yesterday, and with deciduous, fast-growing, short-lived plants and trees generally. The greater the amount of stability and repose, in other words, the slower the growth, and the longer the life of the species, the more full the attainment on its part of the spherical in form. But let us not insist too much upon a verification of our views in detail here. A perennial plant, as is well known, is not an individual, but a vast aggregate of individuals living in community, and compression together. Even though there were no mechanical obstructions, therefore, to the development of the spherical in them, we should not be warranted in expecting it in perfection, or indeed more than mere indications of it. But if not the perennial plant, tree, or shrub, what is it that constitutes the individual in the vegetable kingdom? Is it the bud, or the tuber, or the fruit, or the seed? It is one or other of them; and take whichsoever of them you please, it is obvious that the type in reference to all of them is the sphere.

And here let us remark in passing, that our theory supplies a good morphological account of the expansion of the extremity of the radii in vegetable productions (that is, of the extreme boughs), into thin or discoid forms articulated to the radii, that is, into leaves; for such expansion and articulation is the alone condition by which, from a system of radii or boughs, a spherical surface can be obtained which may bound the system of radii, and give an external form to the tree. Hence also the reason why the foliage tends to form chiefly on the outside, and not in the heart of the tree. It may indeed be said that this is owing to the light and air which rule on the outside, and which are defective in the interior. And this is no doubt true. But these statements do not conflict with each other. The latter, on the contrary, is necessary to the former, for in no case is a morphological law an efficient cause. It is, to use the language of the Platonic school, merely an idea; and a physical cause, some special provision or mechanism to realize the law and make it good there must be in every case.

Our theory gives also a good account of those transverse vibrations of the rays of light, on which the phenomena of polarisation depend, and which have so sadly puzzled students in physical optics. These vibrations are the continual nisus of the rays, to maintain the integrity of the spherical surface of the radiant, which they are obliged to impair and open as they proceed outwards.

Shall we close without looking to the animal kingdom? Of this kingdom, indeed, the characteristic, instead of being stability and repose, is movement and life. On our own principles, therefore, we are not to expect much of the spherical in form here. We are, on the contrary, to expect axial or elongated forms, with only a tending to the rotund, as the power of life moderates, and the individual attains to maturity. Accordingly, this is what we find. The young are slender. Rotundity belongs to middle age. It is the old only who are bent into a circle. It is deeply interesting to observe, however, (as may be done) that animals and organs become lively, restless, and uneasy in the very degree that their forms are departures from the spherical or the symmetrical. Look at the lubberly Medusa, with its hemispherical form, and the radiata generally, compared with the higher orders of animals, which possess axial or lengthened forms, their symmetry determined in relation to an axis, and not a centre. The latter are far more active. With regard to them also, in keeping with our general theory, it is to be observed that when they compose themselves for rest, they roll or coil themselves up, or otherwise make themselves as nearly spherical as their joints and muscles find easy. Of this the usual attitudes of sleep and hybernation, the snake in its hole, the chick in ovo, &c. &c., are illustrations.

Nor is it in reference to the forms and habits of entire species that this principle of sphericity, as the *terminus ad quem* for repose, is of use in science. It may be applied to explain functions, and may therefore be enlisted in the service of the healing art. Thus, with regard to the heart, its ceaseless beating may, when morphologically considered, be regarded as a continual nisus towards the spherical or spheroidal, imposed upon it by its hemispherical or conical form. The beating of the heart may be considered as a continual discharge of matter towards the other side of its equator or base, in the view, as it were, of effecting the production of a heart which shall be spherical and fit for repose—a deeply interesting view, which not only gives death as the end but as the aim of organic life. Happily for our existence in connexion with the body for a time, this alteration in the form of the heart is prevented by the institution of the arterial system, in virtue of which the matter continually thrown off by the apex of the heart into the region where, according to the laws of symmetry, there ought to be another apex, is conveyed away and diffused over the body, and made to minister to its growth or replenishment. The heart is thus made to be the grand minister of life; and the pulse is justly taken by the physician as the index of the state of the entire organic force. But yet it is science as well as poetry to affirm that

Art is long and time is fleeting
  And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still like muffled drums are beating
  Funeral marches to the grave.

According to our theory, however, the heart's action in ministering to life, and its continued failure in the accomplishment of the repose which it is ever aiming at, is greatly assisted by the form of the arteries. They taper from the heart outwards, whereas the law of symmetry demands that they should be cylindrical. Hence the walls in the wider parts will tend to contract, and in the narrower and capillary parts to dilate, and thus the blood will be helped away and ever forward from the heart. But what if it must find its way back to the heart again by a system of vessels which are also tapering, yet so that the blood must there proceed from the capillary and lesser to larger trunks? In this case, we are on our principles to expect a constant tendency in the blood to return upon its track; as also to infer both the necessity and the development of septa in the eddies which result; all which is verified by the characteristics of the venous as compared with the arterial system. Let us only add, that what we have here in accordance with ordinary conceptions ascribed to viscera and vessels, ought rather to have been ascribed to the vital fluid itself, ever aiming at repose, and so at the development of symmetry and beauty.

And here we ought, if we were able, to proceed with the development of the human form, with a view to ascertain its type, which doubtless would also be the type of human beauty when the individual was regarded as the representative of humanity. But centuries must elapse before any such achievement be possible; and not one Cuvier or Owen, not one Oken or Carus, but many must arise before the solution of the problem be even approximated. Artists and amateurs have done a vast deal to show to what an extent simplicity of ratio prevails in the measurement of the human form; and this brings it under the general category of the beautiful, no doubt; but its intense beauty does not depend on the general simplicity of the relation of the leading features to each other. It depends on these relations being what they are in the type. On both hands, on the side of greater simplicity as well as less, there is deformity in the object and disgust in the spectator.

Before the beauty of the human form can be fully appreciated and understood, the type which nature is aiming at in every individual to whom she awards existence, but which she is equally, in the instance of every individual, prevented from actually developing, must be ascertained. And that will be long hereafter, if at all. Whether the laying down, as I have done in a preceding page, of the vertebral column as the keel of the vessel, the corner-stone of the whole structure, and the key note of its harmony, be a contribution in the right direction, I must leave to some future reader, perhaps long hereafter, to consider. At all events, our principle, if it apply at all, applies very extensively throughout nature, and invests with beauty every object which either in its carriage or contour displays this waving line or line of grace. Hence the eminent beauty of the horse, the greyhound, the deer, &c., and of the feathered tribes generally. Hence also the beauty of so many fishes, which, in addition to the waving line of their contours, are so beautifully latticed all over with their silvery scales. Hence also the beauty of mountain and valley, and meandering rivers. Only it must never be forgotten, that in order to secure animation and expression, the wavy, and all forms that are symmetrical, must run into forms which defy the eye to lay them down in simple ratios and balanced parts. This is the condition of the picturesque, which nature is as happy in producing as the simply beautiful, having always at her command so many forces, that, by bringing them to bear upon this object or that as she pleases, she can as she pleases construct the simply beautiful or the picturesque, and that on such a scale, whether of littleness or of grandeur, as may call upon the beholder to designate her product as merely pretty, or truly sublime.

And here let us conclude this chapter, of which perhaps the general reader may think that there is more than enough. In it, however, an attempt has been made to identify the principles of Beauty with the first lines of morphology; and if in what has been advanced there be any soundness at all, it is no inconsiderable step that has been made. It is indeed no more than a return upon an old idea, an idea as old as the age of Pericles at least. But surely it is none the worse for having had its birth in Ancient Greece; and with what name can any conception in the sphere of the Beautiful be so becomingly associated as the name of Plato.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE COURSE OF ART IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE EXPRESSIVE.

SUCH are the charms of beauty, that it is only to be expected of man, as often as he is free and has the means, that he will surround himself with beautiful objects. We may therefore look for them about his person and his house, as well as about his domain, if he have the good fortune to possess one. But we cannot expect nature to supply spontaneously so large a demand. In the domain alone, in fact, is Nature to be found, and that only on condition of respect being always paid to her as superior by him who claims the domain as his property. With regard to the person and the house, and all in short that meets the eye and the ear besides, Nature has entrusted the creation of the beautiful to the genius of man.

Nor has this trust been misplaced or disregarded. Much has not been done towards the amenities of life, nor has man advanced far in civilisation before he has attempted to supplement the parsimony of nature in this respect, and to avail himself of the privilege which the creator has accorded to him to be a fellow-worker with Himself in the creation of the beautiful. Hence the fine arts, architecture and sculpture, drawing and painting, music and poetry, which form at once objects of such intense enjoyment and elegant pursuit.

They may be said to have for their aim to bring into existence beautiful objects in situations where nature does not supply them. Nor need we grant that they have any aim besides. It has indeed been contended equally by religion and philosophy, that the fine arts, besides ministering to the demand of the soul for the beautiful, ought also to be handmaids to her in her aspirations after piety and morality. And the only pity is that this should ever have been denied, or that the advocates of the Beautiful should be found on one side, and those of piety and morality on another. They ought at all times to be on the same side. As to the Beautiful, let it but bosom itself in the infinite, and it is no longer the Beautiful merely; it is the glorious, the adorable; and not admiration merely, but adoration is the emotion which it is fitted to awaken; and not purity of taste merely, but piety is the mental frame and habit which it is calculated to constitute and to leave behind it. And as to the Good, there is nothing like an opposition between it and the Beautiful. On the contrary, the Beautiful and the Good are sisters, or rather indeed far more closely allied; for the Beautiful is the form of which the Good is the substance.

Still, however, let it not be concealed that there is a question how far the fine arts have beauty alone as their aim, and not morality also; for though the truly beautiful, and consequently every true representation of it be essentially moral, yet we never fail to ascribe beauty to the successful representation of an ideal, however hateful or immoral in itself that ideal may be. Thus Shakespeare's representation of Iago, Milton's of Sin, is beautiful, though if we met with either in reality we should recoil from them with the utmost horror and disgust. And hence, a ground on which artists may be found engaged in the representation of objects which, instead of ministering to piety and morality, may excite to impurity and wickedness. Let but the representation be excellent, we are pleased, we call it beautiful, whatever the moral defects or deformities of the original. And hence a question how far such objects ought to be allowed a place within the realm of the fine arts, as objects of representation. But surely the answer is not difficult; for wherever the term *ought* can be used in any discussion, and especially in every discussion which turns upon this term, there can be no doubt that the entire field is bounded by the principles of purity and morality. The fine arts therefore, and every creation within their sphere, ought to exist only in the interest of purity and morality; and the beautiful objects which they create, if they are to awake in the beholder any other emotion or thought but that of their own beauty, ought to awake emotions or thoughts of purity, or holiness, or amiableness, or heroism, or some attribute which bespeaks moral excellence, and tends to produce it in the beholder. By such a limitation, be it observed, the representation of such objects as Milton's Sin or Shakespeare's Iago, is not excluded. On the contrary, nothing of a merely æsthetic nature that I can think of could go farther than Milton's representation to lead one to hate sin with a perfect hatred. And never is our sympathy with Othello more full than when he says, "Iago, if thou be'st a devil I cannot kill thee," and stabs the wretch. The representations of these great masters in art in the very degree that they are beautiful, as such, animate those who realise the representation with the utmost disgust and indignation against the reality. Thus, in depicting what is impure and immoral, the artist may compose in the interest of purity and morality not less than when he portrays the pure and the morally beautiful, while at the same time he introduces into his compositions that variety and those discords, without which there can be no dramatic interest or effect.

The same arguments may be adduced in favour of the representations of such characters as those of Goëthe's Faust. By means of immoralities, the artist teaches lessons of morality in a very effective manner. If his descriptions be sometimes such, as for the moment to invite to crime, or awake sympathy with it, the retribution comes so soon, and falls in such awful measure, that the lesson upon the whole is impressively moral. Our conclusion, therefore, that every composition in the fine arts in having the beautiful for its aim, should also have purity and morality, in one word, Moral Excellence for its end, is by no means so restrictive of the artist as it might at first sight appear to be.

But in opposition to this, it is often maintained, that the true principle of the fine arts is simply the imitation of nature as she is in all her details, and the more closely the better. Of this school, the most thorough-going abettors at the present day (though within a narrow sphere) are among the painters, namely, the pre-Raphaelites. But from that very art, as from every other branch of the fine arts, it is easy to shew that it is not nature as she is in all her details, or as she is in herself, or as she mirrors herself in her own lakes, that is the object of the fine arts; but, on the contrary, nature, as she exists in relation with humanity, and as she mirrors herself in the human soul. It has been fully demonstrated, for instance, as a psychological phenomenon which is constant, that when one looks at any object, then, of all the objects that may be picturing themselves on the retina at the same time, in virtue of their lying within the same field of view, that which is looked at alone is seen in all the minutiæ of its form. The objects lying around present themselves to the mind as little else than masses of colour, more or less varied, and simply for the entertainment, or rather, indeed, the relief of the eye, without distracting it from the principal object of regard. Accordingly, ever since the time when painting aimed at the production of pictures, that is, compositions in colour, possessing a true unity as well as variety, and succeeded in doing so, the central, or main object of regard alone, whether a single object or a group of objects, was wrought out in all its details, and minutely finished. Those lying around were left in the same inarticulate and dreamy state in which they are actually left by the observer, when some one object in nature is contemplated by him. And thus the pencil in the hand of a great master, when working on the principles of high art—art which respects the laws of human nature as well as mere material nature—was able, even in the course of a short life as that of Raphael, for instance, to bequeath many great paintings to posterity; for the execution of a great picture, on these principles, does not demand a great length of time. When, on the other hand, the conception of painting is that of mere imitation in detail, without regard to the laws of observation, then a painting can be regarded as a picture only in respect of its frame, which, whatever the multifariousness of the painted objects within, necessarily forces a certain unity upon them. Such a painting, in fact, is a present to material nature merely, not to intelligence. It is a sad waste of time, and, after all, but an unsuccessful rivalry with the camera obscura—a contest which ought surely to be left to the Chinese, who have an immemorial prescription in its favour.[*]

It is not a servile imitation of nature in all those details which may be incidental in the particular objects that the artist has fallen in with, that is the aim of the fine arts. It is the spirit of nature, and that only when it is speaking a language to which the soul can respond, in the enjoyment of her own spontaneous powers. Otherwise, we have science, not art, between which two things there is as great a difference as there is between the line of a canal, and the course of a river. In fine, it is the ideal, and neither the actual nor the economic, that is the aim of the fine arts. It is *the Ideal*, that is, the forms of reason spontaneously picturing themselves in the imagination at sight of nature. And here if it be asked what this is in reference to *the real*, let it not be for a moment supposed that it is anything superior, anything which nature, after attempting, has been unable to produce, while yet the sculptor, the painter, the musician, may! No; nature does not propose to herself the ideal, but the real as her aim; and, strictly speaking, there is no such thing in nature, considered as a whole, as a failure of any kind. Every effect is truly proportioned to its cause, duly in relation with it, and fully expressive of it. But just because nature does not propose the ideal as her aim, there is an opening and a field for the fine arts. Nature aims at more than the ideal. Not such first lines and flowing lineaments and contours as having great simplicity are always able to command the vote of reason in their favour, and to picture themselves in the imagination, but forms and forces of all kinds, Nature summons to her aid, and boldly constructs the Real. But hence, in virtue of its complication, the Real often transcends our powers of unconscious analysis, and fails, through excess of markings, to awake in us that spontaneous flow, at once of reason and sensibility, which constitutes the æsthetic judgment, and the emotion of the Beautiful. And hence a temptation to partition nature, to view her in a part taken for a whole, and so to bring her within our reach. And when this is done, very possibly that portion of nature which may engage our attention at the time, may be inferior to some conception of our own, and so appear quite defective in beauty so far as it strikes our taste. Let it never be forgotten, however, that Nature's conception, when the whole of her aim is taken into account, is infinitely finer than any that man is capable of. And do but restore to its place in nature the object you have isolated, only view it as a part in the grand whole, and grasp the great ideal of Nature that led her to produce it, when, and where, and what it is, and immediately beauty, and that of the highest order, appears.

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[*] What renders it more incumbent on every lover of high and philosophic art to denounce this truly retrograde movement in painting, is the fine genius of some of its advocates, both with the pen and the pencil, who are losing themselves and being lost upon it. What is now become of the "Theoria," which in "*Modern Painters*," when that work first appeared, was so full of philosophic promise? And who can refrain from regretting that an artist who could conceive, and represent in colours, such exquisite religious feeling as that of "The Return of the Dove to the Ark," in the Edinburgh Exhibition of last year, should spend—how long?—in painting every straw in the heap the youths are standing upon! And what, after all the time lost, and labour bestowed, is the result? According to my conception of what a composition in the fine arts ought to be, it is merely a destruction of the unity of the piece, and a distraction to the observer. Besides, if such a style should come to be dominant, in order to do justice to it in exhibitions, would it not involve great expense in money as well as in time? If, for instance, the fine arts are to aim at such achievements—where illusion is the trophy of success—then to the judges who are to award premiums, ought there not to be added a body of cows for straw, birds for cherries, and so on? It is true that many of the gazers at the painting I have referred to, praised the straw as indicative of infinite genius in the artist, with a delight of which there is no reason to suppose that any cow is capable. But is such admiration really worthy of the ambition of any artist who proposes to himself a higher object than to produce something that will astonish the unreflecting and the ignorant?

Thus, suppose there are presented to the eye two crystals of gold, one with its form geometrically perfect and simple, the other with an indentation in one of its faces, the cast of a crystal of quartz which was there at the time of its formation, an ordinary spectator would at once lay hold of the geometrically perfect crystal as the most perfect object, and declare it at sight to be the most beautiful. And so it is, if viewed as an insulated object—an object out of nature—and in relation to the abstract conceptions of geometry only, as the ideal. But if viewed, not as an insulated individual—not as a prisoner in the hand of a spectator—but as at home in the bosom of nature, and joining in her communion, the product of an exquisite play of forces which were simultaneously depositing and developing I know not how many wholly dissimilar, yet beautifully harmonizing crystals —the crystal of gold with the cast of the quartz in it would be esteemed as the sweetest and the most beautiful of the two. And so in every other case. If we had only strength of intellect enough to imagine, and depth of feeling enough to embrace all nature, we should ever find that nature was beautiful all over;

and every particular object, when viewed as a picture of which the entire panorama of nature is the frame, we should find to be equally, perfectly, beautiful. But for such a discovery we have not reach of mind. Such a contemplation is beyond our means. *It is not all, it is only certain lines and lineaments in nature whose beauty we are fully adequate to catch—those, namely, which are proportionate to our own humanity, and expressive of it.*

And hence the aim of the fine arts is to create objects—in imitation of Nature, no doubt, but yet not mere imitations—not representations of realities in all the complications of actual relationship, but objects existing under comparatively few forces and relations external to themselves. The aim of the fine arts is to realize such ideals as the soul may herself be able to compass, and so be qualified to enjoy and hold to be beautiful. Look at the Belvidere Apollo, for instance, or the Medicæan Venus; how exquisitely simple and flowing their every line, form, and feature! How easy the attitude, and how altogether suitable to the action each is in. Nothing about them that speaks of the difficulties of parturition, the swathings of infant, or the lacings of adult dress, hard labour, or bad weather. They are kept by the sculptor out of relation with all those external forces which in ordinary life tend to complicate the simple, flowing, and purely abstract lineaments of the human form. And hence at once their striking beauty, and their aspect of the Heavenly or Divine—their *beauty* because the soul, in contemplating them, finds that they mirror her own humanity unbroken, finds that they reflect the better part of herself, and so feels herself honoured in them—their *divinity*, because they show by their forms that they have been developed in security from all those brute forces whose wear and tear make ordinary men of us all. The aim of the fine arts, therefore, may be said to be, to develope and represent objects which do not transcend the reach of our minds, objects kindred to our intelligence and sensibilities; among which, happily for the sublimity of the fine arts, THE IDEA OF THE INFINITE holds a conspicuous place.*

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* This view of the fine arts is identical with that which is commonly named the ideal theory—that which regards the true aim and legitimate field of the fine arts to be, not the copying of individual objects, such as the artist chances to have access to, or succeeds in obtaining, not the mere portraiture of incidental or sought-out nature, but the production of generic or typical forms; the complete representation of full, yet simple ideas, such as that of loveliness, manly grace, strength, &c. Our theory

The fine arts may be said to take their rise in connection with architecture, itself the child of necessity, by the adaptation of its forms so as to please the eye, whilst they continue to give protection from the weather, and the addition of sculptures and paintings to give entertainment besides. And a fine problem it is to determine how far the economic value of a building may be tampered with in the interest of beauty. Happily for the fine arts, the truth seems to be, that this may be done to any extent short of that which forces the conviction on the observer of unfitness in the adaptation, a conviction which very seldom intrudes itself, when the building in sight seems in keeping with the general forms and laws of nature. And hence the privileges both of the Greek and the Gothic architecture. Considered either as the abodes of families, or as houses of assembly, but little can be said in favour

only goes somewhat farther than is usual, and maintains that the individual in nature, considered as differing in its form from that which is proper to the species it belongs to, owes that difference not to any defect about it, but to the multitude of relations in which it exists in nature, and in virtue of which, if it have lost somewhat of its specific development and beauty in our eye, it has gained upon the whole, and that in the proportion that the whole of nature is better than any part of it—harmony better than discord, and communion with nature and society better than isolation and solitude.

either of the temple or the cathedral; yet such are both, that the erection of either is justly considered as one of the noblest material works to which any community can devote itself. That both should exist, and each have its special partisans, is only what is to be expected, when we consider the different principles on which they stand. Thus the Greek temple, displaying, as it does, on all hands, the perpendicular and the horizontal which may be regarded as the true co-ordinates of the grand law of gravitation, presents itself at sight as an expression of the first law of nature, which architecture, from the weight of its materials, is called upon to respect. The Gothic cathedral, on the other hand, in so far as it seems to disregard this law, appears to do so in the interest of the eye, by preferring the angles of the rhomboid, that is, of the equilateral triangle, its half and its double, instead of the right angle—a preference which cannot but greatly enhance its beauty, if the principles already explained be admitted.

And here we may, therefore, refer to these two grand modes of architecture as verifications of our principles. That it is the beauty of apparent fitness, and not mere or pure beauty, which the right angle, in comparison with certain oblique angles, imparts, is well shown by them. On comparing these two master-products of art with a view to catch their generic character, it will be found that in the Greek, as has been said, it lies in its rectangularity, and in the Gothic in what may be called its rhomboidalism. Hence in a Greek temple, along with much that is beautiful in its own right, an admirable expression of stability, especially if it be standing in an exposed situation —on a mountain top or cliff, for instance, as if there expressly to brave the elements. Its every form and feature seems in such admirable keeping with the severe law of gravitation, which weighs so heavily on this world of ours, and exacts such homage from all; it so fully displays those perpendicular and horizontal lines which that law tends everywhere in nature to produce, that it looks as if no tempest, no lapse of ages could ever throw it down. And hence also about a Greek temple the charm of a religious expression; for, in virtue of its obvious stability, it seems to refer itself to eternity, to exist for eternity, which is a fine religious idea. Let not the Greek architecture then be lightly spoken of. At the same time, much more may be justly said in favour of the Gothic cathedral, considered as a place of worship; for while, on the one hand, in virtue of the rhombic angles, the lance and lozenge forms which everywhere meet the eye, it is more purely beautiful than the Greek temple; it seems also, by its disregard of the horizontal, and by the little homage that it pays to the weight of its materials, and to their native tendency to tumble down, to be under the protection, if not the very product, of a higher power—even the same power as calls upon the forest tree to arise, and which sustains it while it rears its tufted branches on high—branches which, however, in their noblest aspirations, seem no more than emulous of what has been achieved by man in the architecture of the cathedral. The Greek temple is not devoid of a religious expression; but it acknowledges God only as he has manifested himself in the laws of material nature—its form a homage—its expression a hymn, to the omnipotence of gravitation. There will be no Greek temples where there is no heavy material. There will be none in heaven. The Gothic cathedral, on the other hand, has to a wonderful extent risen above this earthly load, shown its superiority to it, and aimed in spite of it at a beauty which is at once free, pure, and disinterested, and which breathes of heaven. Most fitly, therefore, is a Gothic cathedral a place of worship—most truly is it a religious pile. Nay, it may claim to be a religious teacher. In aiming at, and achieving a victory over the weight of the materials of which it had to be constructed, and in telling its towers to find their home in the sky, the cathedral has prepared the way for the worshipper within its walls, and by its own example is teaching him success in that warfare with earthly appetite, which is the very life of the Christian.

The great drawback is, that in order to secure such an expression, a Gothic building must be very vast; and since it trusts so much of its justification to its beauty, it must also be highly finished in all its details, and very ornate; while a Greek building, let its columns have no more height than that of a man, is already respectable in expression; and nothing more is needed for it by way of ornament, but simply flowing lines on regions which might otherwise appear naked without them. That such lines as are actually found in the Greek architecture are the very essence of all the varied lineaments of the forms of nature has been already shown; and to undervalue them, and to ask for the very forms which nature produces in detail, is to undervalue the type and the genus, and to prefer the individual; it is to put down the historical and the philosophical, and to exalt mere portraiture, and that executed in a material which is altogether unsuited for such a purpose.

Even in reference to sculpture commonly so called, that is, the representation of the human form in stone, the many disadvantages under which portraiture, or the exhibition by accidental individuality can be produced, are strongly felt. Everywhere, in fact, we are taught that imitation in the fine arts must not be servile, but free, according to the spirit and not the letter.

But much remains to be discovered in this department, as may indeed be legitimately inferred from the recent investigations of D. R. Hay of Edinburgh in reference both to the Parthenon and some of the most celebrated statues of ancient art. It is to be hoped that that ingenious and indefatigable enquirer will not stop until he has given the true form to the fine idea which he has already caught, viz., that in the science of the Beautiful, as of Nature generally, lines, when compared as to their dimensions, are to be regarded trigonometrically, that is, in reference to angles in which, and not in the lines themselves, this simple ratio appears which the theory of the Beautiful demands. The rythmical movements of the eye, and the series of visual angles which they determine with the discovery of their most suitable linear measures, is a fine subject of enquiry.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE COURSE OF ART IN DEVELOPING THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE EXPRESSIVE TO THE EAR.

On the subject of architecture, sculpture, and painting, so much has been already written in all the languages of Europe, that although a great deal more remains to be written, still we shall not attempt to do so any further in this work, except very shortly, in relation to some views now to be unfolded respecting colours and sounds, which lead us, if I mistake not, one step deeper into the grand secret of beauty and expression.

It has been already laid down as the very first condition in order to beauty, that there must be unity in variety, symmetry, or simplicity of ratio in the object or the composition which is to be beautiful. The question is as to those ratios to which the greatest amount of beauty attaches. And here it has been generally inferred, that the greater the simplicity of the ratio, the greater the amount of beauty. It has also been usual to estimate ratios as to their simplicity by ordinary cyphering. But let us not scruple to affirm, that for the purposes of the science of æsthetics, not less than for the study of nature generally, ordinary arithmetic is quite insufficient. Thus what more direct and simple than the ratio of a circle to its diameter, or the side of a square to its diagonal; yet it is well known that these are ratios which can never be expressed by ordinary arithmetic, nor otherwise, so far as is at present known in the science of numbers, than by such symbols as $\sqrt{}^2$ or $\sqrt{}^3$ &c. Let it then never be forgotten that when we are merely figuring with Arabic cyphers, though we may be doing all we can as constructive artists, yet we compromise pure science in the very attempt, and can never in this way succeed in tabulating the beautiful dance of nature.

It has indeed been proposed again and again, nay, even generally, to adopt the ordinary diatonic scale in music as the measure, nay, the very principle of harmony and beauty. But when it is considered that the human ear, with all its sensibility to different sounds, finds a comma, or the interval between eighty and eighty-one vibrations, to be as small a difference as it can positively detect, or venture upon marking—a difference amounting to no fewer than five vibrations on the note A of the diapason—it is obvious that the principles of harmony can never be built upon a purely empyrical or experimental basis.

Shall we then set aside the ear, and construct our scale of beauty upon the abstract doctrine of harmonic sounds, on the mathematical formulæ which set forth the subdivisions and crispations of elastic media, when made to vibrate? No; to do this would be to invoke the principle of elasticity to explain everything; whereas there can be little doubt, that in the depths both of external nature and of our own organic functions, the principle of polarity also plays an important part. To adopt the monochord, the principle of elastic vibration as the alone principle of beauty in nature, would be to hold nature as always dancing on the tight rope. That the scale of music when thus applied, has misled some men even of the greatest genius, is obvious. Thus, by a fancied agreement of interval between the extent of the colours in the particular spectrum which he happened to have the means of forming, and those of the successive notes in the ordinary scale of music, even Newton not only committed a grand mistake as to the true composition of the spectrum, but made himself a stranger to the true character of the dispersiveness of different media altogether.

But yet let us not pass this subject altogether, either in silence or in censure of the researches of others. For that there is an analogy between colour and sound, that there are harmonies and discords in both, is certain. And here, for the investigation of this analogy, let us first ask what is the ratio of those colours which are most harmonious? In this region we may perhaps elicit some facts which we may advantageously carry along with us in the investigation of that scale of music on which the beauty or expressiveness of musical composition depend, which, as it appears to us, remains still to be discovered—or rather, perhaps, revived—for both the Asiatics, and the Greeks after them, seem to have been long ago in possession of it.

It is generally conceived among us that the octave, with its upfilling of seven notes, is the true unity and musical scale of nature; and this is a view which may doubtless be advantageously held by the musician, at least, when composing in reference to musical instruments other than the voice; for they all give musical sounds only in virtue of their own elasticity, and the crispations of their parts. The doctrine of the monochord, the harmonic division and subdivision of a string, therefore, is quite answerable to them; and the limiting ratio, between which the notes of the scale shall be found, may be safely said to be 1 : 2, though it must be confessed that under the law of symmetry the ratio of 1 : 3, has higher claims; for a string divided according to the former ratio can never vibrate symmetrically; it always vibrates reciprocally; it is representative of the principle of polarity, or nature in action, not of symmetry, or nature in repose.

Viewed more deeply, however, the octave appears to be not an unity, but a duality, not the true unit scale to which nature and the soul have been mutually attuned, but a couple of such scales, the one surmounting the other, and repeating it in higher notes on the dominant of the octave taken as the fundamental of the second scale.

To convince the reader of this, or at least to pave the way for such a conviction, let us here transfer our enquiry for a moment from the region of sound to the more distinct region of sight—let us ask what is the most perfect harmony in colour? To this question the eye gives a most explicit answer. Thus, when any vivid colour is placed before the eye, that organ creates for itself a certain tint of its own, with which it overlays that which is given, thus softening its colour in the interest of transparency and repose; and this ocular colour is such, that when viewed in juxtaposition with the given colour, the two are perceived to be most harmonious and relatively beautiful, and when made to overlap the given colour, provided it be equally intense, a simple lucidity or whiteness results. These colours, the creations of the eye, are named accidental or complementary, and there are many ways of rendering them apparent. But for these, works on physical optics may be consulted. Their characteristic is that which has just been mentioned, namely, that when taken along with the colour which generated them, and supposing both to exist on the same space in equal intensity, the result is the vanishing of all colour, and the re-establishment of pure lucidity, transparency, or repose with regard to colour. And hence it is that they are called complementary. As examples of such colours, we may mention red and green, crimson and azure, orange and indigo, yellow and violet, &c. Now what is the ratio of such colours? To some the question may perhaps seem strange, but it will cease to be so when we remember that colours can now be represented by numbers, just as musical notes may, and on the same principle. Colours are, in fact, caused or at least uniformly coincident with certain undulations in the æther, as sounds are with certain undulations in the air. Thus in producing pure reds, wavelets are constituted in the æther of such lengths, that there are from 39,000 to 41,000 of them to the inch. In constituting blues, among which are the complementaries to the reds, there are from 51,500 to 56,500. In constituting oranges, undulæ are produced of which there are from 42,600 to 43,560 in the inch, while the complementary indigo gives about 57,800. Yellow has about 46,000, while its complementary violet has about 60,000 and upwards. But in the violet we plainly have a return of red light, or a re-commencement of the scale in a more subdued tone, passing, as it were, into that which, unhappily for our researches, is to our eyes mere darkness. Now on the review of these phenomena, the fact that strikes is, that the ratio of the colours which are complementary to each other is that of 3 : 4; while that which gives, as it were, a repetition of the primary harmony not fully visible to us on account of the darkness to our eyes, is the ratio of 2 : 3. If, then, it be a fact, that one bright colour, when given to the eye, creates for itself another, which being manifested in equal intensity, gives transparency and repose, and that the ratio of these fraternising colours is 3:4, while that of recurrent colours is 2 : 3, are we not called upon to infer that there is some secret in the nervous system, (and if there, then most likely in external nature also), which renders these ratios the condition of sensational satisfaction, or well-being? At all events, this fully appears that, given a colour whose number is 3, the eye is uneasy until it has furnished itself somehow with another colour, which it may view simultaneously, or as soon after as possible, whose number is 4. On the cause of such a phenomenon it is needless to dwell in the present epoch of science, which is in no degree competent to undertake such enquiries. We may merely remark in passing, that the ratio of 3 : 4 is what may be called the ratio of penetration in a system of elastic centres of force. But let us rather observe that this ratio shews itself equally remarkable in the scale of music. Thus, no sooner is a vocal note heard, than the ear, if at all agreeably listening, and if bestowing itself (according to its design), as the interpreter of the feeling embodied in the human voice, and not spoiled by musical instruments, longs to hear a higher note, which is to that which has been sung as 4 : 3, that is, it longs for the fourth above; and not till it hears this higher note can it return to a state of repose, nor will it consent to contemplate, to analyse, or to enjoy the music that is offered to it. Having risen so far, however, it has completed its excursion; it has expressed itself, and is satisfied. And such appears to me to be the true scale of music, considered as a spontaneous covenant, between the human ear and the human voice. It is the tetrachord, not the octave; it is the interval between the fundamental note and the fourth, which ever tends to be the fourth above, but which may sometimes be the fourth beneath; the difference in expression between rising and falling notes being the same as that between rising and falling features, the former cheerful, the latter melancholy; whence, as of the two the cheerful is usually the more congenial, the voice, the soul, seeks upwards. Of the rising mode, the singing of birds in general may be taken as an illustration; of the falling, the roar of wild beasts, as of the lion; among men, cheers and groans. That all music which possesses any true expression is framed according to these principles, might be shewn with much detail, but to attempt it here would extend this work beyond what is desirable.

Let us not fail to remark, however, that the emotion seeking to express itself in sound, may often be so strong that it is straitened when confined within the limits of a single tetrachord. It demands the compass of two in which to embody itself. And when this is the case it naturally takes as the basis of the second tetrachord, the fifth above that note which is the basis of the first, that is, the note whose ratio is to the fundamental note of the system as 3 : 2. Then raising the second tetrachord on this, and reaching the fourth above as the term of repose, the ratio between the limits is that of 1:2. And thus the octave or diatonic scale is obtained. According to this view, therefore, the diapason is a composite scale, the octave consisting of two tetrachords successive to each other, the second based on the note which gives the simplest ratio between the extremes, viz., the ratio of 2 : 3, the extremes being that of 1 : 2. And hence the reason of the semitones which are well known to be insisted upon by the ear between the third and fourth and the seventh and eighth in the octave. They are expressions of the urgency of the musical ear to reach the fourth and the eighth, the closing sounds of the two tetrachords, sounds which it must hear or have in order to its own satisfaction and repose. Nay, it is only art that keeps these intervals to the dimensions of semitones. They tend naturally to much smaller intervals; and in fact they may be, and in the music of some countries, they are, leapt over or omitted altogether.

The most important difference between the beautiful as addressed to the eye and to the ear, is the necessity that in the one case the beautiful object must possess continuity, while in the other case it must be given in successive moments or pulsations. A line before it can be beautiful must flow continuously, and a surface must be smooth. But in music a slide is allowable only as a passage between two distinct notes. For an explanation of this phenomenon as well as of the peculiar ratios which have peculiar expressions, we must look at once to the organisation and the laws of mental and of elastic action.

The latter, when membranes, chords, or columns of air are the subjects of them, that is, such materials as musical instruments are made of, demand that the intervals between successive sounds in the scale shall be very large, and in comparatively simple ratios. In fact, no more than thirteen are ventured upon in the interval between unity and its half or double. The human voice, however, in the natural expression of thought and feeling, which is the perfection of music, makes use of a great many more. The ratios are of course much less simple, or in other words the symmetry is much less. But if so, then from our principles it follows that, if in speaking compared with chanting, much of the simple or merely beautiful in sound is lost, in the very same degree, the picturesque or expressive is gained.

And here we may take occasion to remark that all the principles of beauty which have been unfolded in reference to the aspect of visible objects, hold equally good in reference to the beauty of those that are audible only. Thus if, by any means, as for instance by diffusing opaque particles, dust, smoke, or the like, in the air, we could render visible those systems of undulæ which cause sound, then those among them which, in consequence of their symmetry pleased the eye most, and were characterised as prettiest, would also for the same reason (their symmetry) please the ear most, and be characterised as most musical or harmonious. The angler and fishermen generally always expect most fish where they observe the most beautiful ripple on the water, and though they regard that ripple as of use only in so far as it conceals their hooks and nets, yet it is not impossible that the fishes are determined to seek such localities by the agreeable sounds which the beautiful ripple may produce in their ears. And similarly the feathered tribes may be led in no small measure to the choice of their various retreats, by special music with which to them all nature may be resonant, that of the grove more congenial to one, that of the open field to another, and that of the mountain cliff to a third. It is at all events certain that the ear of the lower animals often possesses a sensibility of which we can scarce form any idea; and it is equally certain that not a river can roll its waters to the ocean, not a breeze can stir, but there must be music, though to hear and to enjoy it finer organs than ours are required.

But to return to such music as the human ear can appreciate, we have further to remark that if we could but anyhow succeed in seeing such systems of aërial undulæ as were not simply symmetrical in their forms and intervals, but varied and boldly superinduced the one upon the other, yet without mutual destruction and rather with mutual strengthening and support, then, just as in reference to such a composition if viewed by the eye, we should characterise it as picturesque, so when it falls upon the ear we find it to be dramatic.

Where the straight line rules, it gives, as has been shewn, when it presents itself to the eye, an air of severity, solemnity, grandeur, to its object; and just so where a system of judiciously sustained monotones is introduced into a musical piece, it gives the same expression to it. Where the chant or air taken in its elements or phrases moves up and down so as to represent in sound the waving line, or line of grace, the melody is then most graceful and sweet, and tends to awake the warmest and most tender affections in the breast. And its effect is upon the whole cheerful or plaintive according as each successive measure, each portion which represents a thought or expresses a feeling, rises or falls.

Nay, so completely do the same lines when constructed in musical notes, possess the same expression as they have when presented to the eye, that when the chant or air mounts and descends the scale excessively, and makes sudden leaps from note to note, so as to represent a system of excessively waved or serpentine lines, the moral expression and influence of the air is bad. Instead of moving to soul-delighting and improving thought and feeling, it moves only the muscles, it moves only to dance.

These views might be illustrated by the structure of all musical compositions which possess any native truth or dignity about them. But the analysis, even of the shortest air, if by a master, would require many pages. And we must here content ourselves with these remarks merely as hints to those who are disposed to pursue the enquiry for themselves, remarking further only this, that in proceeding to the analysis which is to verify the views here laid down, the bars and other imperfect artificial features of musical notation must be altogether neglected, and the meaning of the melody alone be regarded.

A broad margin must also be left for the unmeaning and the stupid in music, under which category a very large percentage of the music of the present day must be included, the public having been seduced by the pianoforte, so as to be content with a mere display of harmonic beating, if only it be done fast enough, and ramble over the instrument far enough. Corelli, Handel, the old masters, never wrote without having a meaning to express, and there are entire operas of Mozart in which there is not a note of nonsense. But now almost everything depends on the counterpoint, which is, moreover, often, when most popular, of a very meretricious character.

It need hardly be added that the same principles apply to articulate sounds or words, and regulate the æsthetic value of sentences, and explain the demand of the soul, now for poetry, and now for prose; as also the sentiment being given, they serve for determining what kind of poetry, what kind of prose, is most fit for expressing it. But here the subject opens on a field so vast that the only escape is to decline it at present altogether, though not without the hope that it may be afterwards resumed. The following principles of literary composition, however, at once present themselves:—

1. When the speaker aims at communicating his thought with the greatest facility and transparency to the listener, and at instructing him without awaking emotion, his sentences ought to be as symmetrical and as simply beautiful as possible. The order to which the ear is accustomed being here taken for the symmetrical, and the simple for the simply beautiful.

2. When the speaker's aim is to excite as well as to instruct, he must practise departures from symmetry (inversion) in his speech, and give a rhythmical, grandiose, or orchestral march to his syllables, according as his subject admits.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE PERCEPTION AND THE EMOTION OF THE BEAUTIFUL.

A MOST interesting investigation, co-ordinate with that which has just been closed, is now before us—viz., into the psychology of the beautiful, or the inquiry how we come to perceive beauty and to enjoy it. And to this let us now proceed. We may introduce ourselves to it, by recurring to the objection which, as has been already admitted, may with seeming cogency be made to the theory of the Beautiful which has been advanced in this work. If beauty, it may be said, be but the signature of nature, attesting that her laws, her economy, have been observed and realized by the beautiful object, why, then, all nature ought to be all really beautiful, nay, all equally beautiful; for all nature is all really, nay, all equally the product of the laws of nature;—which universality, or at all events equality of beauty, however, it may be justly added, is not borne out by observation. Such is the objection. But to meet it we have only to call to mind, as it belongs to us now to do, that the beautiful is one thing, and the perception of it by us is another. Beauty, in fact, is a power in nature. Perception is a power in us; and, considering the great ignorance of the laws and economy of nature on the part even of the most learned, and the total ignorance of them on the part of the multitude, who are nevertheless as fully alive to the charms of beauty as the philosophers, instead of taking for granted that we shall perceive beauty wherever it exists, the question surely rather is—how come we to perceive the beauty of nature at all? To the solution of this inquiry let us now proceed.

God, as has been already so often stated by us, and as is indeed universally admitted, has laid the material universe under laws. He has granted to nature a constitution, a charter, an economy. Let not this be for one moment forgotten. It is the great fact which forms the ground of all science, which alone indeed renders a science of nature possible. And now as to the soul of man let us ask—the soul, that is destined to have nature for her companion during all the pilgrimage of this life, and if she is to know material repose at all, must find it on the bosom of nature, as to the soul, let us ask—has the Creator left her to be merely a lawless thing—merely a self-will—merely an *ignis fatuus* of thought and feeling? No; God has laid the soul under law as well as nature. He has given to her also a constitution, a charter, an economy. In her simple Being the soul is indeed free, essentially free; and supposing her to exist alone in the universe, or out of all relation with God and the other beings and things around her, she would be absolutely free; or rather let us say mad-free; for, to a finite spirit, if acting from within itself in the essential deployment of its own activity, when altogether unrelated to other beings and things, or unconscious or regardless of its relations to them, the only manifestation of liberty that would be possible would be a mere madness. But this is not what there is. At once to secure liberty to the soul, and to prevent madness from overtaking her in the enjoyment of liberty, God has placed the soul under influential relations with the other beings and things which exist around her. He has constituted them, so that they shall present or manifest themselves to her; and co-ordinate with this presentation on their part, He has empowered her to seize and hold them; in other words, in answer to the evidence of objects, He has empowered the soul to perceive, to believe. And thus the soul, in herself free, is brought to find herself existing in the midst of a mighty panorama of beings and things, both spiritual and material, which take possession of her and hold her, and of which not a few seize her in such a way that she cannot by any means emancipate herself from them. She finds herself obliged to *believe* in Being in general, and engaged in *perceiving* many objects in particular. But to be obliged to believe is to be laid under law; for to believe is to obey. And thus, by the institution of belief, is the free but finite soul of man saved from going mad-free. Liberty is rendered both rational in itself, and safe for humanity and for nature, as also enjoyable by the individual in whose consciousness it glows, and whose choice it directs.

Arranging in classes as comprehensive as possible the objects, not herself, which impress the soul of man with beliefs, we may reduce them all to

I.—GOD.

II.—NATURE.

These two cannot be run into one. But so much the better for the interests of science as well as of truth; for thus correspondingly we may at once classify the natural beliefs of the soul under two grand heads, viz.—those which are due to the presence of God, and those which are due to the presentation of nature. And as between these we may expect well-marked differences, so are we at once able to define these differences; for nature presents itself everywhere around us; and of God we possess a manifold revelation.

Thus, with regard to God, his presence is imminent and always, and it is the presence of a Being who is infinite and perfect, and essentially cause, unity, and immutability or identity. Of nature, on the other hand, the presentation is contingent, incidental, variable.

And hence, in the soul we are to look for two classes of beliefs; the one the impress on the soul of the presence of God as the Being of Beings, which shall be imminent and always, that is, constitutional (badly named innate), and in which the ideas of infinity, perfection, cause, unity, and identity shall take the lead; the other, incidental, occasional, variable, and such as ever-changing nature, and the ever-changeful soul herself may awake.

And accordingly, looking either directly into the mind itself, or into those works which treat of its phenomena and powers, do we not find as answerable to the first, *i. e.*, the presence of God; "the laws of belief," to adopt the favourite term of Dugald Stewart; "the principles of common sense," to adopt that of Dr. Reid; "ideas," to adopt Plato's term, and "reason," to adopt that most generally used—that which, when it is made to include the processes by which the soul normally operates on these ideas, is perhaps preferable to any of the others. Answerable to the latter again (the presentation of nature), have we not our incidental perceptions of sensible objects and phenomena, as they happen to be or to occur around us? Yes; such a classification of our mental phenomena has been very generally adopted.

But what we have here principally to attend to is, that in this way the intrinsically free soul is impressed with permanent principles of guidance—is in this way enabled to see her way and to choose it if she will; more shortly, the soul is endowed with reason, and that in virtue of the power, the presence, the providence of God.

But it has been already seen that nature is what it is, in virtue of the very same fact, the power and the providence of God. Now God, as the Being of Beings, is one and the same universally. He is one and the same when impressing by his Being the free spirit, so that it shall not be mad-free, but rationally free; and when impressing matter so that it shall not be a chaos, but an economy. As the author of all, He is one and the same when awarding reason to man, and a system to nature. But if so, then, are we not to expect with regard to both reason and nature, that their laws, so far at least as both are capable of the same laws, shall be the same? Yes; and so they are. And this is the reason why, along with the perception of an object as possessing form, colour, &c., we have a perception also of its beauty. Simultaneously with the presentation of nature in the outward, exhibiting herself in her phenomena to the sense, while realizing and expressing the laws of nature, the soul spontaneously, at the sight, submits in her own depths to the same laws, constructs the same forms and phenomena under the higher influence of her own ideas of the infinite and the perfect. Reason is thus brought into play along with sense and by sense; and to this couple of spontaneous operations, that in sense and that in reason, there attaches a spontaneous comparison, and from this there results a necessary judgment, that is, a perception, and that of beauty.

But this is not all. There never fails to be the companionship of a delightful emotion. This, indeed, in the circumstances, there ever must be, provided only that the soul at the time be free to bestow herself upon the beauty which she is beholding; for the mode of action existing in the soul when the beautiful object is under her eye or in her thought, is at once spontaneous, unimpeded, and according to her own constitution or mind; and such a state of mental being or action is in every case one of delight. Be it that the soul is following in the wake of the organisation which has been charmed into a state of unwonted activity, perhaps by the genial air of a spring day, perhaps by the laughing-gas of the chemist, perhaps by some common toxicant. Be it, that she is running on in her own spiritual domain, leaving the organic action far behind her, raised, perhaps, into a state of exalted activity, by the discovery and embrace of some truth now manifesting itself in its beauty, which she had long sought and sighed for in vain. In either case, and in every case, let there be but a spontaneous flow of soul, and there is delight. In other words, let consciousness or life flow freely, as it ever tends to do, and there is enjoyment; for to live is to enjoy. And uneasiness of every kind, from simple sorrow or regret, to the deepest agony or distress, is nothing else but a stoppage of the soul's life, a suspension or arrest imposed upon the soul in opposition to her, in her spontaneous determination towards the outpouring of her activity. Be it a lacerated nerve that constrains her to attend to some bodily part from which she struggles in vain to emancipate herself; be it a thought or an image that haunts her, and will not let her turn away from it and go free; in either case, in every case, pain and suffering, by whatever name it may be called, is but a suspension, an arrest imposed somehow upon the flow of the soul's life, a damming up or stemming, contrary to the nature of a spirit and the condition of its wellbeing, of the current of its spontaneous activity. The delight imparted by the emotion of the Beautiful, therefore, falls to be explained under the general theory of enjoyment.

Thus have we dipped so far into the theory of the beautiful, psychologically considered, that is, into the means whereby we come to perceive beauty, and to experience the delight which the perception of it awakens. By some it may perhaps be thought that we have entered deeply enough into the general subject, yet let us descend one step deeper; for not only is it possible to give a more articulate form to the intellectual theory of beauty, but it is almost necessary to go a little farther. To leave it in the form in which it has just been laid down, in fact, would be apt to betray the reader into a serious mistake as to the order of creation, and the relative dignity and nearness to God of the spiritual and the material worlds. Thus, in what has preceded, both have been represented as equally, and it might be thought similarly and simultaneously under God—He having impressed the same laws upon both according to their respective capacities or receptivities. But this is not an orderly conception of the fact; this is not the true relation between the spiritual and the material. These two are not contemporaneous and equally near to God in that sense in which alone there can be nearness and distance with respect to Him. The spiritual world is older and more akin to God than the material. The world of spirits is the middle term or messenger, as it were, between God and the material creation. The laws which God has laid down for both were communicated first to the spiritual, then to the material. They reach the material through the spiritual; and by the time they do so, much of the virtue is gone out of them. In the spiritual world, near to himself, near to the fountain-head of Being, God has entrusted his creatures with *powers*, liberty, feeling, thought. In the material, far down the stream of creation, He permits *forces* merely—repulsion, attraction, polarity. There is a vast difference, a great loss as we descend. But still there is an analogy; and the material world is to the soul what it is, not because it is a material world, but because it is an echo in which the spiritual world is still whispering. In fact, the three grand phenomena and laws which form the very ground of the intellectual system—viz., *liberty* (the individuality-preserving power), *love*, and the law of *representation* are carried down into the material system, and though only in a residuary form, and as mere forces, yet are they represented by the three grand forces of *heat* (the insulative or repulsive agency), *attraction*, and *polarity*.

Nor does the impress of the spiritual on the material terminate here. Thus, in accordance with the unity and identity which a spiritual being possesses under a present God, who is for ever one and immutable, it is so constituted, that in the midst of its own intrinsic everchangefulness as a principle of volition, it can find intellectual satisfaction and repose only in establishing in the objects of its regard a presiding unity in the midst of the variety which is presented, and in recurring to this unity as often as it has been distracted or carried away by the charm of the variety.

And this constitutional habit it is which entitles a spiritual being to the name of an Intelligence. Now this law, too, has been carried down into the material creation, and is represented by the institution of that mode of action which every product of material nature displays, in virtue of which every form, though caused from moment to moment to depart from itself, ever tends from moment to moment to return to itself, and to maintain its unity and identity in the midst of the variety which its own inner force or surrounding forces may induce. In a word, the law of intelligence, which ever demands unity and identity in the midst of variety, is represented in the material creation by the power of resilience, the phenomenon of elastic action, that grand dynamical institution which, along with the primary forces of repulsion, attraction, and polarity, secures symmetry—that is, unity in variety in all natural bodies, as the condition of their stability and repose. In fine, the material creation though in merely residuary mechanical forms, such as we should alone expect, at a distance and in the outfield, embodies and represents the phenomena and laws of the intellectual, the spiritual world.

And hence the reason why the sight of material nature interests the soul as it does. That which impresses the sense descends also into the reason, and designs and pictures itself there under the same laws, but in those purer lines and more congenial tints which the soul's own substance determines, and under the benignant and ennobling presence of the ideas of the infinite and the perfect, and that love of them which their influence secures. Along with a play of colours or of sounds in outward nature, there is a play of reason in the inner man; along with the *actual* (or rather we ought to say the observed), given by the senses, there is the *ideal* given by reason. To the latter the soul holds as the type, as that which, in her judgment, ought to be. And therefore, in the sphere of form and movement, the ideal is to her emphatically the beautiful, and the touchstone whereby she becomes competent both to appreciate and to enjoy Beauty in the outward. When on comparison, there is found or rather felt (for analysis and separation in the case is usually not practicable) to be an agreement between the observed and the ideal, there is a judgment in favour of the beauty of the object; when there a disagreement is felt, there is a suspension of such a judgment, or an affirmation of the reverse of beauty, as the case may be.

Moreover, along with this act of judgment, there is a delightful emotion, or the reverse, as plainly there must be under the general theory of enjoyment and uneasiness which has been already laid down. Thus, when the observed, as given in the vivid field of sense, is itself the realization of the ideal, then the ideal developes itself with peculiar facility and success, flowing, as it were, into the very lineaments of the observed, as into a mould—a mode of mental being which cannot but constitute a delightful flow of feeling. When, on the other hand, the ideal, in order to make good its own existence, must turn aside from the observed, or, if obliged to face it, then must struggle up in opposition to its pretensions, there is and cannot but be uneasiness at sight of the object—uneasiness which may even touch upon anger, as indeed it never fails to do in an ingenuous soul, when that which is observed is an action violating order and happiness. But here we touch the sphere of morals which we do not propose to enter on in this work. Nor need we recur to the more legitimate consideration of the ideals of forms and movements more particularly than to say that, in accordance with the grand law and love of reason for unity and identity in the midst of variety, plainly this, unity in variety must be the secret of them all; to which we may add, with regard to lines, that since this condition is always fulfilled wherever an algebraic equation is possible, we may adopt this as the test whether a line be beautiful, *is its equation possible?*

By applying these principles to the æsthetic elements which have been already laid down, all will be found to explain itself. Nor need we dwell longer on the subject here.

Let us rather hasten to remark that, though the grand principle of beauty be thus in itself absolute and unvariable, there still remains room for a great variety of tastes, all of them legitimate. The old adage, "de gustibus nil disputandum," may still be retained. There may be great variety of tastes; for while all will fall within the formula of unity in variety, some observers will have a legitimate preference for the predominance of unity, some for that of variety. The man to whom law and order are dearer than life and liberty will probably deem to be most beautiful objects those in which unity predominates; while he to whom life and liberty are dearest will probably have a demand for extreme variety. Though the principles of beauty are as fixed as those of mathematics, and as truly objective, yet they are very general, and, even after the influence of custom, fashion, and the like have been eliminated, which cannot but interfere to a sad extent with correctness of judgment, there is a legitimate field for a great variety of opinion in matters of taste. But on this we need not enlarge. And indeed let us here bring the exposition of our general theory of the Beautiful to a close, yet not without retracing in a few words the ground we have gone over, and recapitulating the results we have arrived at.

First, then, there is beauty in nature because of God, of whose divine intelligence and feeling, nature being the creature, is, and cannot but be, the manifestation.

And secondly, as to that wherein the beauty of nature consists, it follows that since God operates in nature only in laws, these laws, the laws of nature, are and cannot but be the grounds of the beautiful, and nature is and cannot but be universally beautiful.

But thirdly, when we begin to break up nature into fragments, and to confine our regards to particular parts and objects in nature, as in consequence of the finitude of our powers and capacities we are obliged to do, some objects are and cannot but appear in our eye, to be more beautiful than others; for some are the products of a few forces, a few laws, and have simple sweeping contours, so that, when viewed by our finite powers, it seems as if in them the laws of nature were eminently triumphant; while others are the products of so many laws, so many conspiring or conflicting forces, that their spontaneous analysis, or analysis in feeling (on which the perception of beauty depends), transcends the reach of our minds, and we look upon them with comparatively little favour.

And hence the origin of the fine arts, and a legitimate field for their existence—not to imitate nature merely, much less to attempt to surpass her either in conception or in execution, but to aim at the production of such compositions as shall be more simple and more easily embraced by our powers of spontaneous analysis than nature generally is—in short, such as are in nearer relationship to humanity than external nature generally is—a relationship this, which, if it imply greater simplicity, does by no means imply anything lower—the soul having within her own bosom a feeling and a favour for "The Infinite," which mere material nature can never reach nor realize; whence the fine arts, if in one respect they be beneath nature, yet in another rise high above her—high by all the difference in fact that humanity is higher than mere material nature.

As to the perception of the beautiful, and how we attain to it, this we have seen to be because of the fact, that the laws of nature, which determine the forms and movements, the features and phenomena of nature, are not singular inventions, making their apparition in material nature for the first time, the intellectual system, the soul, till then a stranger to them; but because they are the residuary action, and the representatives far down the stream of being, of those very laws of the spirit-world, which constitute spontaneous intelligence or reason itself, the virtue of thought and feeling detained above, and nought but dynamic action allowed beneath; yet so much allowed, that at sight of their operation and products, that is, at sight of the *actual*, the soul claims kindred with it, finds herself at home in the midst of it, and in answer to material nature thus presenting itself, echoes in her own depths forms and phenomena like those before the sense; thus putting herself in possession of things of the same order, designs, and pictures in lines of thought and feeling, formed under the presiding influence of the ideas of the perfect and the infinite—in one word, ideals; which, however, as they are overlaid by the brighter and more imposing imagery of sense, are seen only obscurely; and which, except in those who have cultivated their taste more than is usual with persons in general, can only be expressed in a judgment as to the beauty of the object or the reverse, accompanied by an emotion, which is pleasing to the reverse.

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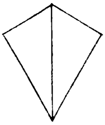
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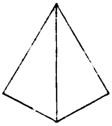
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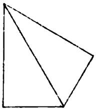
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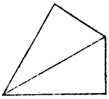
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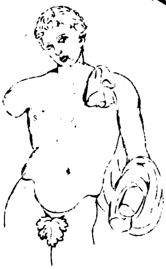
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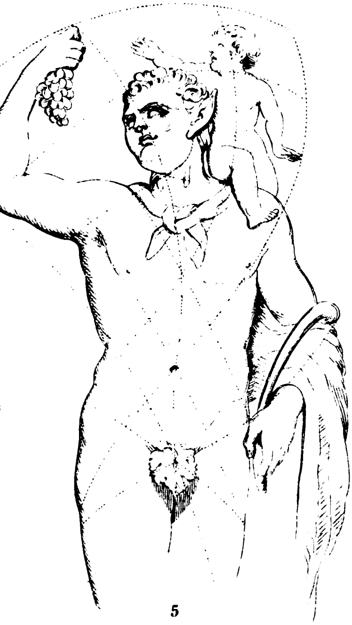
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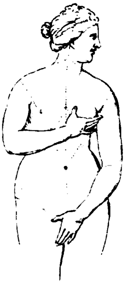
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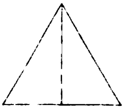
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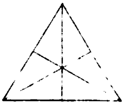
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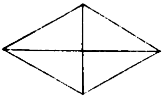
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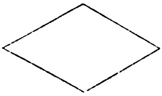
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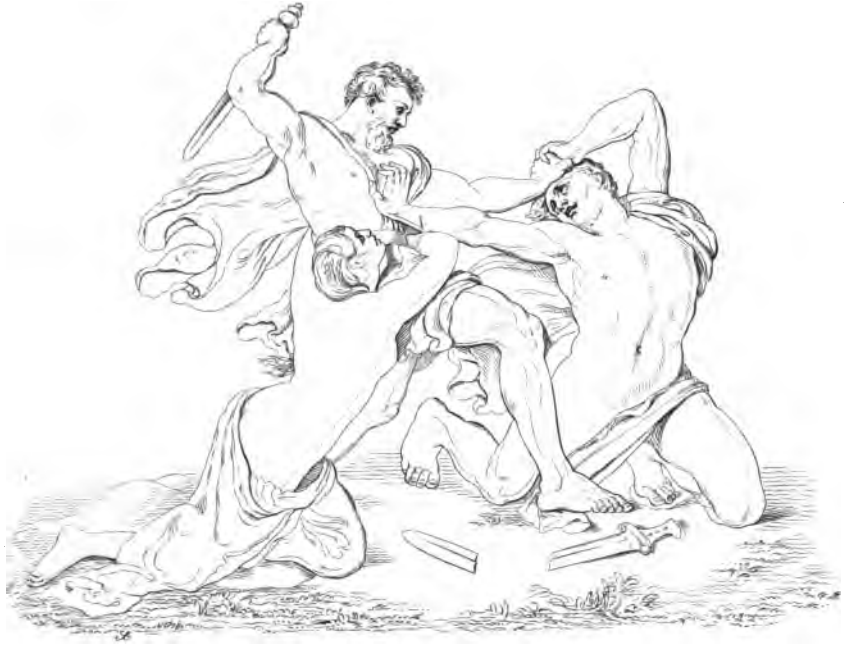
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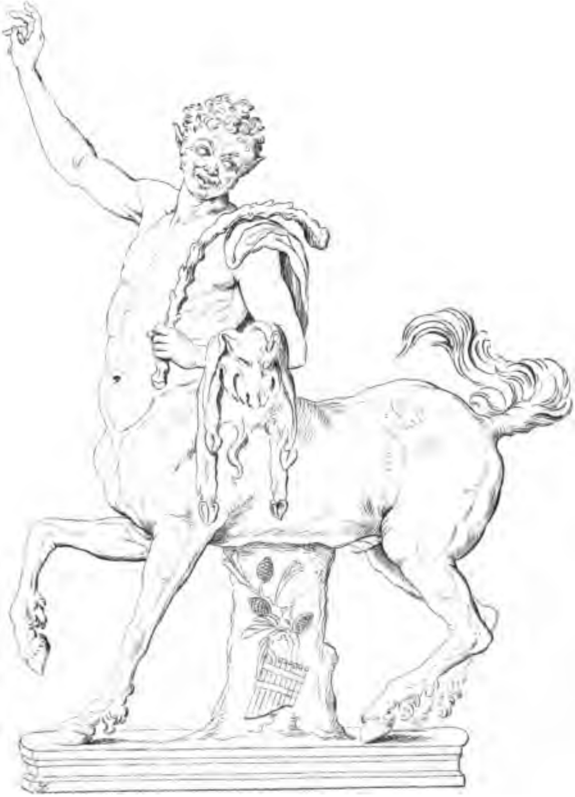

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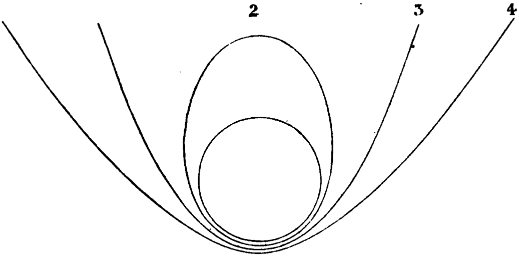

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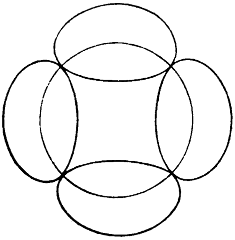

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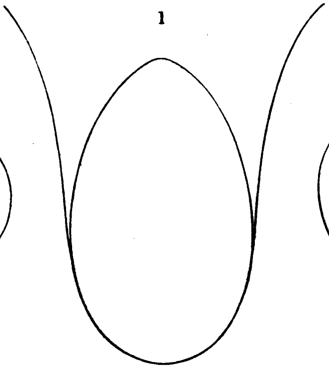

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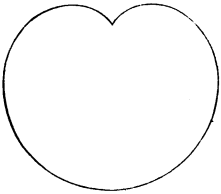

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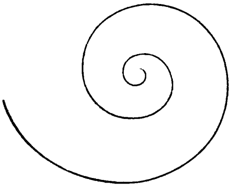

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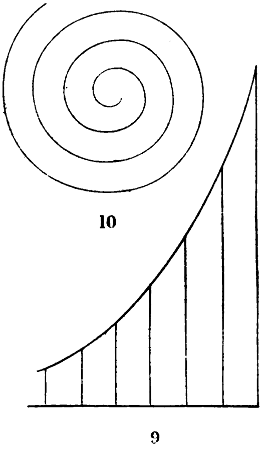

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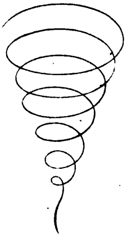

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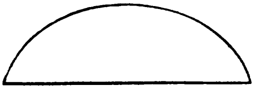

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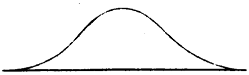

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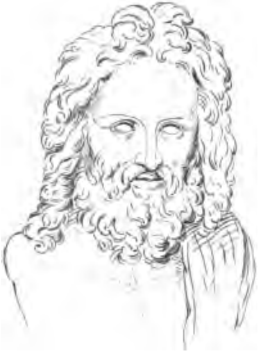
PLATE 7



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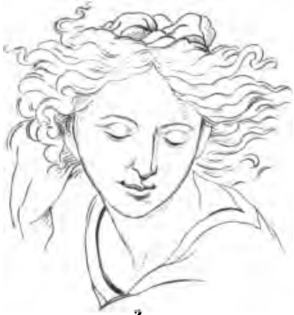

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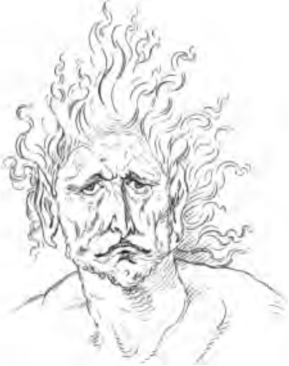

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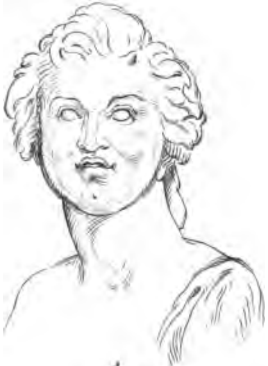

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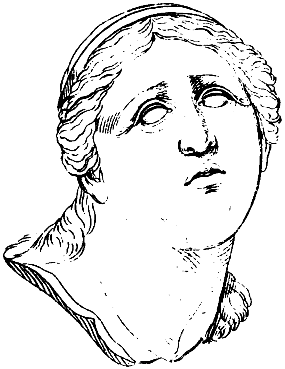

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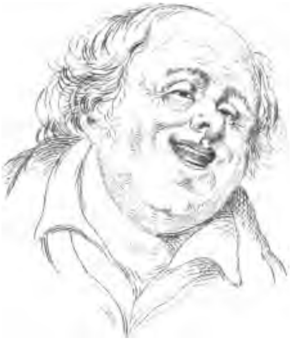

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